CHANGING BODIES AND MINDS:
"CRIPPLED CHILDREN" AND THEIR MOVEMENT
IN THE UNITED STATES, 1890-1960

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

“Changing Bodies and Minds: ‘Crippled Children’ and Their Movement in the United States, 1890-1960” traces disabled activism within the “crippled children’s movement,” an early twentieth-century effort to promote the care, education, and support of children with orthopedic disabilities headquartered in the Great Lakes region of the US. Such work is often credited to non-disabled male philanthropists or Progressive reformers. Through examining this movement, I argue that the limited influence of disabled people in organizations supposedly designed to support them is a far more recent development than is commonly believed—that is, that the rallying slogan “nothing about us without us” used by the disability rights movement was a response to conditions created in the mid-twentieth century. Disabled men and women, particularly former “crippled children” such as polio survivor Blanche Van Leuven Browne, played essential roles in creating and backing this movement. They claimed authority and promoted movement policies based on their own experiences of “crippled childhood.” In looking at these claims to authority based on experience, I offer a new periodization for histories of disability and disability activism. Claims from experience underlay the origins of the movement, rooted in Browne’s Detroit hospital-school, and appeared throughout the rise of its central organization, the International Society for Crippled Children, in the pages of movement periodicals and institutional publications. Even as philanthropists, doctors, and social workers increased their control over the movement in the 1930s, the experience of “crippled childhood” continued to exercise power through disabled activists’ and childrens’ writing. Ultimately, however, these voices lost influence to medical and philanthropic alliances for polio prevention by midcentury. To put it quite simply, this dissertation explores a brief moment when disabled people proclaimed themselves experts in their own lives and gained access to platforms through which they could voice this expertise, and argues that these efforts are obscure not due to their lack of importance but to a later reinvention of the causes and organizations they created.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite its influence, few people are familiar with the movement that laid the groundwork for current legal and social approaches to education and access for disabled Americans. Predating both the late-twentieth-century Disability Rights Movement (DRM) and those who created it, a "crippled children's movement" formed in the early to mid-twentieth century U.S. to benefit physically disabled children. The International Society for Crippled Children (ISCC) swiftly became the central player after its creation in the early 1920s, though the organization did not originate the movement; many allied and separate organizations were also part of this work.[1] This movement entwined philanthropic, medical, and activist aims, seeing all three of these forms of action as complementary (and perhaps inseparable). Core priorities of the movement included providing medical care, organizing transportation to schools and building specialized schools, writing and publishing work to drive social change, and policy advocacy in local, state, and federal governments.

Through examining this movement, I argue that the limited influence of disabled people in organizations supposedly designed to support them is a far more recent development than is commonly believed—that is, that "nothing about us without us" was a response to conditions created in the mid-twentieth century.[2] In addition to the steering factors of medical practices and priorities, philanthropic practices, Progressive concerns over employment, efficiency, and eugenic fitness, an activist strand of thought guided the crippled children's movement, informed by disabled writers and their experiences and narratives of crippled childhood. It is this strand

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[1] There are various iterations of the ISCC, at times the same as or slightly distinct from it: the National Society for Crippled Children (mostly used in the later period of this study), the Ohio Society for Crippled Children (the original group, which split into the state-level Ohio Society and the larger umbrella organization ISCC early on). For simplicity, I refer to the organization as the ISCC throughout.

[2] James I. Charlton, *Nothing about Us without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Doris Zames Fleischer and Frieda Zames, *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

that I trace throughout this dissertation, from the role of disabled activism in the movement's earliest beginnings to the loss of influence of disabled children and adults in steering the movement by the mid-twentieth century.[3] By tracing activist thought in the crippled children's movement, this work shows how the recent past can obscure the truth of a more distant historical narrative and interrogates the role that gender, race, ability, and social standing (related to but more specific than class, as professional affiliations and perceived expertise also informed this calculus) played in whether activists and philanthropists of the movement received credit for their contributions in later years.

By envisioning these disabled writers and thinkers as activists, this dissertation rewrites the timeline associated with historiographies of disability, building on the work of historians who emphasize the role of disabled experience in pre-DRM disability activism and highlighting early calls for fundamental tenets of disability rights work and challenges to medical control. The movement began in polio survivor Blanche Van Leuven Browne's childhood in the 1890s. Her experiences in a children's hospital ward inspired her to reimagine care and cure for disabled children. By 1910 she had opened her own institution and created a model for crippled child care which emphasized education and personal connection over medical and surgical cures; however, by the end of the decade, local funders had unseated her from her position in favor of a more medicalized institution. The International Society for Crippled Children, inspired by her institution, grew into the central organization of a widespread movement, opening local and state chapters across the nation. The ISCC and its allied organizations, like schools and hospitals, retained a dedication to incorporating disabled voices into movement priorities, offering

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[3] I use "disabled activists/activism" to describe those active in the crippled children's movement during the early to mid-twentieth century, and reserve "disability rights activists/activism" for the more organized later twentieth-century movement. This choice is a bit artificial but provides greater clarity.

leadership and writing opportunities for disabled activists and children. These early activists, primarily through writing and speaking about their experiences, guided the broader movement toward social change: education, interpersonal connection, state funding, and self-definition to benefit children with disabilities and the adults they would someday become.

However, these voices dwindled within movement rhetoric and literature by the mid-1930s, as organizations for disabled children shifted towards more medicalized, more philanthropic approaches. The new National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, as well as the ISCC, prioritized bodily cure and fundraising over promoting disabled experience as a useful guide for policy, and moved toward an image-focused approach which left few spaces for adults and children with disabilities to express themselves within these organizations. To put it quite simply, this dissertation explores a brief moment when disabled people proclaimed themselves experts in their own lives *and* gained access to platforms through which they could voice this expertise, and argues that these efforts are obscure not due to their lack of importance but to a later rebranding of the causes and organizations they created.

Self-Definitions

Defining the boundaries of the terms “cripple” and “crippled child” occupied a central place in the priorities of both disabled and nondisabled members of the crippled children’s movement, and both were far more significant as *social* categories than as *medical* categories.[4] The word “cripple,” consistently contested throughout the period discussed by this dissertation, n

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[4] My use of the phrases “crippled child” and “crippled children” throughout this dissertation situates this discussion within a particular moment in which the term did not only refer to a child with a particular genre of physical disability but was also a signifier for a complex image under constant discussion and redefinition by philanthropists, medical professionals, social workers, disabled activists, and the public at large. For the sake of fluidity, I drop the quotation marks surrounding this phrase for most of the text, but it should be read as a quotation representing a category ill-expressed by contemporary language.

common parlance described only those who did not work, who were useless to society, or who "allowed his physical handicap to put him down and out."[5] This claim was not only the province of nondisabled rehabilitation professionals and army officials—many disabled people lauded by the movement as success stories rejected the word. Some even questioned the usefulness of identifying as a member of a particular disability-related group at all.[6] However, as Brad Byrom has described, others were remaking "cripple" into a descriptor akin to the modern use of the word "physically disabled person" or "person with a disability," and these were some of the activists working within the crippled children's movement.[7]

Disabled activists identified the crippled child using an intentionally capacious definition: someone with a disability related to the physical function of limbs, bones, or joints, ones which would likely be categorized today as "orthopedic." These disabilities were usually caused, depending on the period, by poliomyelitis, bone/joint/spinal tuberculosis (also known as Pott's disease), amputation, accidents, or congenital disabilities.[8] However, the phrases "cripple" and "crippled child" were continually under debate and in flux depending on professional leanings, organizational purposes, and state laws. Writers like influential movement editor Joe F. Sullivan wished the term to serve as a unifying identifier: "A cripple is in need of crutches, wheel chairs, tricycles, artificial limbs, orthopedic surgery, etc."[9]

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[5] Paul Lawrie, "'Salvaging the Negro': Race, Rehabilitation, and the Body Politic in World War I America, 1917-1924," in *Disability Histories*, ed. Susan Burch and Michael A. Rembis (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 329.

[6] Reinette Lovewell and Mary Sandys Hutton were two who critiqued the word. Reinette Lovewell, "Rubbing in Salt," *The Crippled Child,* November-December 1924, 5; Mary Sandys Hutton, "Don't Let People Think You Are 'Crippled,'" *The Crippled Child*, January-February 1925, 5. On the second point, see C. Lee Cook, "What Shall We Do With Our Cripples?" *Hospital School Journal,* December-January 1920, 12.

[7] Brad Byrom, "Joseph F. Sullivan and the Discourse of 'Crippledom' in Progressive America"," in *Disability Discourse*, ed. Mairian Corker and Sally French (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999), 157–63.

[8] I also use "disabled children" or "children with disabilities" to refer to this specific group, although in general use these terms refer to a much larger group of children with a greater variety of impairments.

[9] Joe F. Sullivan, "What Is a Cripple?" *Hospital School Journal,* November-December 1920, 4.

The category was intentionally inclusive, but it was also intentionally exclusive. This exclusion was linked to the critical importance that the movement placed on education, particularly in subjects like writing and citizenship. Disabled activists like Browne and Sullivan promoted such education as a key need for crippled children, and in doing so set their approaches in stark contrast with the medical and vocational efforts that dominated the period; however, this emphasis also worked to associate physical disability with intellectual achievement and distance it from intellectual disability. The movement explicitly denied association with intellectually disabled or "feebleminded" children throughout its tenure. The category also generally did not include children who were blind or deaf—crippled child activists perceived those children to be in a better social and structural position, as many states had already devoted welfare divisions or institutions to their care and schooling— or those with chronic illnesses, although children with cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and rheumatic fever danced in and out of consideration by these groups.[10]

These goals—education, intellectual capacity, citizenship— were also reflected in the movement's definitions of "cure," a term that was not so debated as "cripple," but which movement leaders used vaguely and broadly to indicate a variety of bodies and abilities. Disabled activists believed that the central features of determining whether "cure" had occurred centered more on a person's ability to think, work, and participate in public life as a citizen than on bodily change. As Catherine Kudlick describes, cure is a concept that seems older and more "unambiguously good" than it is, and its replacement of an older concept of "care" as a goal of medical work necessitated a shift in assumptions about what bodies should be able to look like

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[10] As Sullivan noted, "A 'hunchback' is not necessarily a cripple; a blind, deaf, or dumb man is not a cripple; neither is an invalid always a cripple." Sullivan, "What is a Cripple?," 4.

and do.[11] Like "crippled child," "cure" implied a range of things within movement discourse—anything from restoration to the level of function a child enjoyed before an accident or illness to the provision of prosthetics to aid the child in walking or manipulating objects. Paving the way for a medical-activist alliance, orthopedists generally promoted a similar definition of cure before and during the early years of the movement, because, as Byrom points out, they were unable to cure children's bodies in a medically meaningful way; thus, "orthopedists joined with businessmen and others to redefine the meaning of 'cure' in terms of employment and financial independence."[12]

Interventions

This study departs from previous work by treating the "crippled children's movement" as a genuine *movement,* both related to and distinct from the rehabilitation movement. The crippled children's movement was not a purely activist enterprise, but disability activists injected activism into work that also included philanthropic, reformist, and medical aspects. Scholars often overlook the activism of disabled writers and thinkers during the early twentieth century, subsuming many of their efforts into a larger, medically-dominated effort known as the rehabilitation movement, and sometimes attributing their achievements to nondisabled philanthropists, doctors, and politicians.[13] Byrom notes that there is much contradiction in the rehabilitation movement, but ultimately concludes it achieved a "remarkable degree of unity."[14]

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[11] Catherine Kudlick, "Comment: On the Borderland of Medical and Disability History," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87, no. 4 (2013): 540–59, https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2013.0086.

[12] Brad Byrom, "A Vision of Self-Support: Disability and the Rehabiliation Movement in Progressive America" (PhD Diss., University of Iowa, 2004), 61.

[13] Byrom, "A Vision of Self-Support;" Beth Linker, *War's Waste: Rehabilitation in World War I America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Nora Groce, "Disability and the League of Nations: The Crippled Child's Bill of Rights and a Call for an International Bureau of Information, 1931," *Disability & Society* 29, no. 4 (April 21, 2014): 503–15, https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2013.831752.

[14] Byrom, "A Vision of Self-Support," 4.

So too did the crippled children's movement, and I build on histories here that highlight the role of cooperation amongst seemingly disparate interests in building movements.[15] However, one cannot understand the efforts for disabled children by treating them only as a segment of the larger rehabilitation movement. To do so would be to miss the unique interworkings of the category of the crippled child, which was afforded medical, social, emotional, and educational differences from disabled adults and inspired action from different groups.

The crippled children's movement is especially politically significant because of its focus on the citizenship and participation of (theoretically apolitical, sympathetic) children. The movement offered a relatively unique opportunity for children to speak and be heard, even encouraging them to participate in policy advocacy or analyzing identity terminology. Many disabled adults who had once been crippled children themselves saw childhood as a formative period of their lives that they wished had been different and that they wanted to improve for future generations. Child-saving was a popular wing of Progressive efforts, and children as a group are often considered universally worthy of support (although in practice, the level of support and who qualifies as an "innocent child" was and remains highly racialized).[16] For many adults, children hold symbolic power, often seen as representative of a nation and its future.[17]

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[15] For example, Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Roberta S. Gold, "'I Had Not Seen Women Like That Before': Intergenerational Feminism in New York City's Tenement Movement," in *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 329–55.

[16] Alice Boardman Smuts, *Science in the Service of Children, 1893 - 1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). See also Judith Sealander, *The Failed Century of the Child: Governing America's Young in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); James Alan Marten, *Childhood and Child Welfare in the Progressive Era: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2004), 3; Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Lisa Pruitt, "The Medicalization of Children's Play in American Hospitals in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *International Journal of Play* 5, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): 262–76, https://doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2016.1231882.

[17] For children as symbols of the nation, see Alexandra Stern and Howard Markel, eds., *Formative Years: Children's Health in the United States, 1880-2000* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); Sealander, *The Failed Century of the Child*; Paula Fass, "The World Is at Our Door: Why Historians of Children and Childhood Should Open Up," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (2008): 1–31; Sara Dubow, *Ourselves Unborn: A*

However, this interest in children does not necessarily translate to a belief in children's political power or the ability to determine the direction of aid. Rhetoric scholar Risa Applegarth has noted how rarely adults generally and scholars particularly seriously consider children's political speech, as adults question not only children's understanding of political matters but also their "rhetorical agency"—that is, their ability to speak independently at all.[18]

This dissertation also reframes existing dynamics between medical and disability history and offers new insight into the role of disabled people, particularly disabled women, in pushing back against hierarchical medical oversight. Medical and disability history have a contentious yet intertwined relationship.[19] While medical history has pursued patient-centered inquiries as a marker of the field's progress, disability studies work often fights the notion that disabled people should primarily be seen as patients to be cured as opposed to people united by a common identity.[20] This argument is related to the social and medical models of disability, which disability studies scholars have defined and articulated. Whereas medical models have historically constructed disability as a problem to be solved and repaired via medical intervention, social models suggest that a person's environment creates disablement and that disability is an identity rather than an opportunity for intervention.[21] Nevertheless, the history of disability is inextricably intertwined with that of medicine; disabled people have historically

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History of the Fetus in Modern America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Margaret D. Jacobs, *A Generation Removed: The Fostering and Adoption of Indigenous Children in the Postwar World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

[18] Risa Applegarth, "Children Speaking: Agency and Public Memory in the Children's Peace Statue Project," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (January 2017): 49–73, https://doi.org/10.1080/02773945.2016.1238104.

[19] Beth Linker, "On the Borderland of Medical and Disability History: A Survey of the Fields," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87, no. 4 (2013): 499–535; Catherine Kudlick, "Comment: On the Borderland of Medical and Disability History."

[20] Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Typhoid Mary: Captive to the Public's Health* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750 to 1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[21] Recent works in the field have further complicated this binaric understanding, by adding such frameworks as the cultural model. Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell, *Cultural Locations of Disability* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

been subject to and socially defined by medical oversight, and many have spent large parts of their lives within medical institutions.[22]

This dissertation joins recent work decentering medical categorization from disability definition, highlighting the role disabled activists played in defining what it meant to be "crippled" during the early twentieth century. As historians have suggested, changing policies and procedures around employment redefined disability during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[23] These social factors were far more potent than medical categorizations when it came to establishing who was disabled—a worker may be diagnosed and treated for a missing finger or arm by a doctor before and after the turn of the twentieth century, for example, but that worker was still highly employable in many industries before the turn of the century, whereas new calls for employee standardization from 1890-1920 meant that this worker was "disabled" and unemployable in later years. This dissertation turns its focus to the ways in which disabled activists articulated their own definitions of disability and briefly succeeded at centering their ideas even within a constituency of philanthropists and medical professionals.

Disabled activists, particularly in the movement's early days, pushed back against orthopedists' power to control the boundaries of what disability meant and offered their own terms, recommendations, and priorities around disablement. The existing state of care for crippled children was predominantly defined by separate medical and educational (largely vocational) efforts, and overwhelmingly treated as the province of charitably-minded doctors to

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[22] Moreover, as disabled theorists like Tobin Siebers have argued, disability experience can be bodily as well as social—the feelings associated with impairment are not always reducible to social factors. Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

[23] John Williams- Searle, "Cold Charity: Manhood, Brotherhood, and the Transformation of Disability, 1870-1900," in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 157–86; Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*.

oversee.[24] Women with disabilities were deeply involved in this movement, and their histories align with other works which trace how women have created Progressive movements and institutions which have been usurped by professional men, particularly within the history of medicine.[25] In looking at their contributions and critiques, this history reperiodizes challenges to medical authority and innovative approaches to disability treatment. Much scholarly work places pushback to the growth of allopathic medicine in the mid-twentieth century.[26] This dissertation shifts focus to earlier critiques of medical power to define and control the body.

Disabled self-definition did draw influence from scientific and medical ideologies, however; this dissertation also highlights the role of eugenics in these activists' ideas and builds on work that shows the complex ways that the notion of improving humanity through selective breeding informed even marginalized groups. Disabled activists were keen on distancing their charges from "feebleminded" children, and although the movement claimed attention to racial integration, disabled activists were content to leave discussion of and care for children of color to the philanthropists and medical professionals within their organizations. Along with working-class people and people of color, people with all types of disabilities experienced discrimination based on eugenic considerations, although those with intellectual disabilities were arguably most impacted.[27] While historians have most commonly focused on White, nondisabled eugenicists in

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[24] For example, many of the institutions collected and described in Edith Reeves, *Care and Education of Crippled Children in the United States* (New York: Survey Associates, 1914), https://www.russellsage.org/care-and-education-crippled-children-united-states.

[25] Naomi Rogers, *Polio Wars: Sister Elizabeth Kenny and the Golden Age of American Medicine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), xix.

[26] Robert A. Nye, "The Evolution of the Concept of Medicalization in the Late Twentieth Century," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 39, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 115–29, doi:10.1002/jhbs.10108, 118. See also Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). This kind of critique should not be confused with the existence of alternatives to allopathic medicine, which of course long predate these. James C Whorton, *Nature Cures: The History of Alternative Medicine in America* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[27] Deborah A. Stone, *The Disabled State* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, "The Eugenic Atlantic: Race, Disability, and the Making of an International Eugenic Science, 1800–1945," *Disability and Society* 18, no. 7 (December 2003): 843–64; Baynton, *Defectives in the Land*.

positions of institutional, scientific, or governmental power, some marginalized groups also embraced eugenic thought and contended that they in fact counted as part of the solution group, not the problem group. Rather than strict disavowal, many sought to ally their group with eugenic fitness and distance themselves from the "truly unfit." [28] Crippled children's activists contended with these beliefs through an approach similar to that of DuBois and other practitioners of "Black eugenics": instead of rejecting eugenic thought, they emphasized their own eugenic fitness and disavowed other groups or subgroups which were the "truly" dysgenic.[29]

The movement's project of definition and control over cultural ideas of disablement changed over time to center medical expertise in defining disability. Renowned disability historian Paul Longmore has suggested that the early twentieth century was "the moment when policy makers and health care, charity, social-service, and education professionals institutionalized the medical definition of disability that thereafter dominated public policy and professional practice."[30] This dissertation explores this institutionalization process and

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[28] Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995); Pernick, *The Black Stork;* Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Walton O. Schalick, "Children, Disability and Rehabilitation in History," *Pediatric Rehabilitation* 4, no. 2 (April 2001): 91–95, https://doi.org/10.1080/136384901300225850; Mitchell and Snyder, "The Eugenic Atlantic;" Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Susan Currell and Christina Cogdell, eds., *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006); Garland E. Allen, "'Culling the Herd': Eugenics and the Conservation Movement in the United States, 1900-1940.," *Journal of the History of Biology* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 31–72; Natalie Lira and Alexandra Minna Stern, "Mexican Americans and Eugenic Sterilization," *Aztlan* 39, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 9–34; Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Fixing the Poor: Eugenic Sterilization and Child Welfare in the Twentieth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).
[29] Gregory Michael Dorr and Angela Logan, "Quality, Not Mere Quantity, Counts: Black Eugenics and the NAACP Baby Contests," in *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*, ed. Paul A Lombardo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 68–92. See also Kim E Nielsen, *The Radical Lives of Helen Keller* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 11.
[30] Paul K. Longmore, *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 56.

complicates this statement, showing that the shift in control was slow, uneven, and not fully realized until midcentury.

Finally, because it was such a core focus of the crippled children's movement, this dissertation asks new questions of the history of education. Treatments of disability and education have tended to focus on the incorporation of disability into educational spaces, taking up topics such as the evolution of special education or health work in public schools, as well as the roots of the disability rights movement in university-level activism.[31] This focus is for good reason—these events are legible through policy and documentation, as well as relevant to concerns of modern schooling.[32] Educational inclusion and exclusion also often serve, as in the case of racial segregation and integration, as a reflection of broader trends of social and political access—schooling, like housing, transit, or recreation, is a public arena in which contests of identity and oppression play out.[33] However, this approach also tends to position education as an

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[31] Robert L. Osgood, *The History of Special Education: A Struggle for Equality in American Public Schools* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2008); Patterson, "Points of Access;" Richard A. Meckel, *Classrooms and Clinics: Urban Schools and the Protection and Promotion of Child Health, 1870-1930* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013); Scot Danforth, "Becoming the Rolling Quads: Disability Politics at the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1960s," *History of Education Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (November 2018): 506–36; Williamson, *Accessible America*.

[32] As John Rury has discussed, historians of education as well as other disciplinary historians necessarily prioritize the current concerns of their attached discipline in addition to historiographical concerns. See John L. Rury, "The Curious Status of the History of Education: A Parallel Perspective," *History of Education Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (2006): 571–98.

[33] One interesting exception to this scholarly trend is the history of D/deaf education, in which debates over manualism and sign language both became a matter of public discourse and reflected particularly trenchant concerns about religion and personhood. See Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*; Edwards, *Words Made Flesh*. For schooling as a reflection of broader trends of access, see Clif Stratton, *Education for Empire: American Schools, Race, and the Paths of Good Citizenship* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016). On housing as a reflection of social and political access, see Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009); Richard Henry Sander, Yana A. Kucheva, and Jonathan M. Zasloff, *Moving toward Integration: The Past and Future of Fair Housing* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018); on transit, see Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890 – 1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999); Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance— a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010); on recreation, see Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Erin D. Chapman, *Prove It on Me: New Negroes, Sex, and Popular Culture in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

obvious good, with less interest in how education served the goals of groups who worked to access it.

This dissertation reverses this common inquiry to focus on how schooling figured into turn-of-the-century self-conceptualizations of disability, prioritizing writing, communication, and citizenship as key. Like other education reformers and rights activists, people with disabilities used schooling as proof of citizenship, hoping that intellectual achievement would impress upon the able-bodied world the capacity and worth of disabled Americans. A study of the movement's tenets of disabled education adds to a historiographical consideration of education's role in social movements. Historian John L. Rury suggests that education has served as a tool for changing society in a diverse array of arenas throughout US history. These efforts include those designed to overthrow existing systems of subjugation, such as institutions organized by African-Americans in the post-Civil War period, as well as those which were themselves oppressive, as in nineteenth and twentieth-century uses of schooling to force indigenous children to assimilate. Although some professionals attempted to provide education to intellectually disabled children, they generally considered "feebleminded" children incapable of citizenship, holding so few rights that they could be unwillingly institutionalized and sterilized with or without parental consent.[34] By emphasizing physically disabled children's need and aptitude for academic education, the movement highlighted their capacity for true citizenship and allied them with normalcy rather than difference.

Markers of civilization and citizenship played vital roles in educational projects like these, making behavior as well as academic subjects paramount.[35] Gender was deeply significant

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[34] Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Fixing the Poor*; Trent, *Inventing the Feeble Mind*.

[35] For racialized and gendered behavior as markers of citizenship during this period, see Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization.* These efforts did not always achieve their goals—of all groups which purported to change their social status through education, middle- and upper-class White women were the most successful. John L. Rury, *Education*

to the project of educating crippled children, whose "cure" would be participation as an equal citizen in a gendered society; for many disabled activists, gendered markers like toys or clothing also marked the child being treated like an individual student and not an institutional subject. Disabled girls and women were caught between expectations that they would become wives and mothers and thus should be trained in domestic arts, but also that they should be prepared to support themselves, as disabled women could be considered not only undesirable but also eugenically dangerous. Thus, girls who grew up within the movement received mixed messages about what they could expect in adulthood.

Sources and Methods

Although this project is in conversation with histories that focus on institutions and organizations, it is not an institutional or organizational history. The research methodology used is specifically crafted to avoid one of the dangers of institutional history: it becomes too easy to start such an inquiry at the beginning of the organization rather than in the groundwork that was laid for the institution before it began. Histories of the March of Dimes are likely to begin with the people and events that sparked *that* organization directly; they are unlikely to investigate the less formal foundations laid by earlier institutions, organizations, and activists. As chapter two discusses, the origin stories of the International Society for Crippled Children are not the same as the origins of the crippled children's movement; though the ISCC takes over much of its activity in the 1920s, the movement itself arose from the ideas of a disabled woman who lived and worked in Detroit over a decade before the ISCC's founders took any interest in children with

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and Social Change: Contours in the History of American Schooling (New York: Routledge, 2016), 98, 111, 113-115; see also James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

disabilities. Two of the key questions this project answers, then, are, how *did* this movement begin, and what impact did that beginning have on its progression?

This dissertation tackles this question using a variety of source bases, including letters and periodicals authored and edited by disabled adults and children themselves. Many scholarly investigations of disability history rely heavily on sources written by nondisabled legal, medical, or social authorities about people with disabilities, both fiction and nonfiction, in order to theorize or understand historical beliefs about disability.[36] This project focuses on the strand of experiential discourse stemming from disabled activists, writers, and readers. It is rare that historical work draws together the shared ideology (and the differences of opinion) that linked disabled writers in this period—the current and former crippled children associated with the International Society and those who had come of age before the movement began and helped to organize and promote it. Some have been treated briefly or at length as individuals or as part of stories about polio.[37] This chapter, for the first time, examines their work and experiences together and at length, combining slightly more prominent names like Joe F. Sullivan with lesser-known figures like Blanche Van Leuven Browne, Reinette Lovewell, Mabel Starrett, and the countless children who wrote about their experiences at movement organizations. When analyzed collectively, their voices take on a more powerful position—a tireless undercurrent of

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[36] For example, Martin F. Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation: A History of Physical Disability in the Movies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Mary Klages, *Woeful Afflictions: Disability and Sentimentality in Victorian America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Linker, *War's Waste*; Baynton, *Defectives in the Land;* Rose, *No Right to Be Idle.*

[37] Byrom, "Joseph F. Sullivan and the Discourse of Crippledom;" Brad Byrom, "A Pupil and a Patient: Hospital-Schools in Progressive America," in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, The History of Disability Series (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 133–56; Byrom, Brad, "The Progressive Movement and the Child with Physical Disabilities," in *Children with Disabilities in America: A Historical Handbook and Guide*, ed. Philip L. Safford and Elizabeth J. Safford, Children and Youth (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2006), 49–64; Daniel J Wilson, *Living with Polio: The Epidemic and Its Survivors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Barbara Floyd, "The Boy Who Changed the World: Ohio and the Crippled Children's Movement," *Ohio History* 118 (2011): 72–90; Naomi Rogers, *Polio Wars: Sister Elizabeth Kenny and the Golden Age of American Medicine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 174.

personal experience encouraging the movement to take up challenges of access, definition, and empowerment.

By using an untapped wealth of archival sources by and about people with disabilities, this dissertation comes to different conclusions than many earlier inquiries. One example is particularly relevant: the image of the legally isolated disabled person. Susan Schweik's *The Ugly Laws* has been one of the more influential disability history texts outside of the field; many historians think of it first when asked about disability history. Ugly laws were a class of legislation passed in many US cities during the nineteenth century which prohibited the display of disabled bodies in public. Many who have read *The Ugly Laws* come away with an interpretation of visibly disabled Americans as hidden away in their homes, legally sequestered out of sight. However, this was not the case for all disabled people. As both Schwiek and Kim Nielsen suggest, ugly laws were unevenly applied and inextricably tied to class.[38] The social problem they responded to was not so much unsightly bodies as unstoppable impoverishment—cities had become rife with people seeking alms. They were born out of a similar impulse to today's anti-homeless laws and architecture, designed to "clean up" the city of the evidence of poverty.[39]

This dissertation complicates this legal isolation narrative in two ways: one, by showcasing how the disabled people involved in the movement defied hiddenness, finding places for disabled people in public, in industry, in politics, and in literature that may surprise those more acquainted with an image of disability history defined by people cloistered away in

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[38] Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, 89.

[39] Sarah Johnsen, Suzanne Fitzpatrick, and Beth Watts, "Homelessness and Social Control: A Typology," *Housing Studies* 33, no. 7 (October 3, 2018): 1106–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2017.1421912; Robert Rosenberger, "On Hostile Design: Theoretical and Empirical Prospects," *Urban Studies* 57, no. 4 (March 1, 2020): 883–93, https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098019853778.

isolation; and two, showing how the crippled children's movement attempted to solve this problem in their own way, through a different kind of legislation. Rather than prohibit disabled people from exposing themselves to the world, they attempted to make governments (federal, state, and local) responsible for the well-being of disabled citizens within their bounds.

Similarly, this dissertation analyzes fiction authored by disabled people to explore their self-definition and political ideologies rather than to understand nondisabled society's views on disability. While the bulk of these sources are nonfiction archival records, I also explore the ways disabled activists used fiction to express their ideas, particularly Blanche Van Leuven Browne in chapter one and the children of chapter three. Blanche Browne, the key instigator of the movement and the central subject of chapter one, told much of her own life story through lightly fictionalized novels and shorter works. The children published in movement magazines competed in story contests in the mainstream periodicals, and published short narratives within in-house periodicals. Both historians and literary theorists have argued for the value of fiction as a historical source, suggesting that it offers insight into the social and cultural mores, anxieties, and values of a period.[40] On a smaller scale, the fiction of these disabled writers provides insight into the moral and social priorities which undergirded their choices and beliefs.

Chapters

This dissertation includes four chapters. **Chapter 1,** (Mothering a Movement: Blanche Van Leuven Browne and the Creation of the "Crippled Child," 1890-1918) argues that polio survivor Blanche Van Leuven Browne's ideas and institution, opened in 1907, made lived

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[40] For example, Allan H. Pasco, "Literature as Historical Archive," *New Literary History* 35, no. 3 (2004): 373–94; Mario T. Garcia, *Literature as History: Autobiography, Testimonio, and the Novel in the Chicano and Latino Experience* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018).

experience a critical part of movement rhetoric and goals. Her emphasis on educating and providing long-term connection to children in her care lingered as themes for the movement even after departing from the Great Lakes region in 1918. (Parts of this chapter appear as "'Every One of Them Are Worth It": Blanche Van Leuven Browne and the Education of the 'Crippled Child.'" *History of Education Quarterly* 60, No. 3, August 2020, 324-350).

Chapter 2 ("A Cripple Myself": Disabled Writers and the International Society, 1918-1938) contends that adults who had once been disabled children, such as the editor and teacher Joe Sullivan and the journalist Reinette Lovewell, used their experiences and their writing ability to steer crippled children's work toward access and education from the late 1910s to the early 1930s. It also shows how these priorities butted up against ideologies of cure and efficiency rooted in medicine and philanthropy within the movement.

While the movement's adults grappled with the inconsistencies of its blend of ideologies, disabled children's writing wove medical, philanthropic, and activist ideals together in their work. **Chapter 3** ("We like to hear of the letters so dear": Disabled Children's Writing, 1918-1940) argues that disabled children developed their own culture of activism through their writing, which appeared in both movement publications and student-edited in-house periodicals at hospital-schools and day schools. Children's writing blended the priorities of medical, philanthropic, and activist concerns, treating social change, charity, and cure as equal parts of an unconflicted whole. Additionally, their work highlights how the movement's contradictory proclamations about race and gender played out in its institutions, revealing the racial inequity and lack of diversity in children's spaces and the gendered training that boys and girls received in expectation of the adults they would someday become.

Despite its fame, the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (NFIP, later known as the March of Dimes) in the late 1930s and early 1940s was not the unprecedented salvation of disabled children but rather a late but influential entrant into the existing fray. However, it did play a key role in shifting public focus on and impressions of children with disabilities. **Chapter 4** ("You Simply Can't Quote a Four-Year-Old Boy": Changing Childhood Disability, 1933 – 1960) contends that both the NFIP and the ISCC shifted public-facing material on disabled children from voices of experience to images designed to be interpretable by a mass audience. This shift obscured the realities of earlier disabled child activists from historical memory, as many scholars have taken the claims of these midcentury organizations at face value.

CHAPTER 1: MOTHERING A MOVEMENT: BLANCHE VAN LEUVEN BROWNE AND THE CREATION OF THE "CRIPPLED CHILD"[41]

In 1896, a 15-year old polio survivor told her doctor at St. Luke's Hospital that she intended to use her unique knowledge to open her own institution, as "I know even better than the doctors can know what a crippled child wants and needs."[42] By the time of her death in 1930, she had indeed opened a hospital-school in Detroit; she had also created a movement for crippled children which promoted many of her ideas about children's needs even as it disavowed the extent of her influence. 'Mother' Blanche Van Leuven Browne, as she named herself, rooted her work in her own "crippled childhood"— her experience of disability, not prevailing trends of medical or philanthropic approaches, guided her practice. Her efforts laid the groundwork for the activism of the International Society for Crippled Children (ISCC). The later crippled children's movement built on structures she made, such as the Van Leuven Browne Hospital-School and the Van Leuven Browne Magazine. More significantly, the organized movement promoted concepts she originated— defining crippled children as a group that was both inclusive and exclusive while also acknowledging their individuality, prioritizing children's need for education and sustained connection as well as medical care, and promoting the power of disabled voices in determining the direction of work for disabled children.

Despite Browne's importance, scholars have failed to see the disabled woman whose ideas and institution provided its impetus. By beginning this inquiry into the crippled children's movement with Blanche Van Leuven Browne and her papers, rather than with the organization

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[41] Parts of this chapter were previously published as Leanna Duncan, "'Every One of Them Are Worth It": Blanche Van Leuven Browne and the Education of the 'Crippled Child.'" *History of Education Quarterly* 60, no.3, August 2020, 324-350, https://doi.org/10.1017/heq.2020.28.

[42] Blanche Van Leuven Browne, *A Story of the Children's Ward*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: The Van Leuven Browne Publishing Co., 1911), Preface. A version of this story also appears in Blanche Van Leuven Browne, "My Work for Crippled Children," in *The World's Work*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1913), 77–81, accessed December 28, 2018, http://archive.org/details/worldswork26gard.

of the enlarged Michigan Hospital-School or the formation of the International Society for Crippled Children and their institutional and organizational records, the seeds of a movement planted by a disabled woman become visible. Other discussions of this movement—if authors even believe it approaches the status of a "movement"—find its origins in the activities of nondisabled Ohio businessmen.[43] Scholar Barbara Floyd, for example, roots it in the discovery of Toledo teenager Alva Bunker, which sparked Toledo businessmen to begin investigating and investing in crippled children's care and education in Ohio and eventually led them to create the ISCC. However, by her own account, these businessmen sent Bunker to Browne's institution, which showed them what changes in body and mind were possible for the crippled child—her work of a decade provided the "cure" that inspired them.[44] The Ohio movement, particularly the voice it gave to more activist demands, stemmed from Browne's approach to the crippled child—an approach rooted in disabled and gendered experience.

Ultimately, Browne herself moved away from the movement due to her clashes with medical professionals and philanthropists who became involved with her work, as the increased influence of medical professionals on the movement and in American society made the rejection of surgery an untenable position for a successful institution. Browne had long believed that pure allopathic medicine was not enough to support disabled children. Her views eventually evolved into a total disavowal of casts and surgery for crippled children—the most common orthopedic treatments for physically disabled children, particularly by the late 1910s. Her critique of the medical profession coincided with her loss of power over her institution. Despite this, Browne's influence outlasted her tenure in Detroit, sustaining the role of disability experience in the

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[43] Barbara L. Floyd, "The Boy Who Changed the World: Ohio and the Crippled Children's Movement," *Ohio History* 118 (2011): 72–90; Groce, "Disability and the League of Nations."
[44] Floyd, "The Boy Who Changed the World."

movement even when medical and philanthropic entities and interpretations threatened to overpower it.

Browne's personal papers and publications provide the core of the narrative. These materials include years of the *Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, as well as one published novel (*Story of the Children's Ward*), one published novella (*Easter in the Children's Ward*), and one partial, unpublished novel (*The Skimmings of the Cauldron, or That Which Boiled Over*).[45] Most critically, she left a variety of scrapbooks, personal papers, and one partial register of children in the home, which in addition to providing their own wealth of information, provide many points of correspondence with the novels. The fictional sources are only lightly fictionalized—the main characters of each are thinly veiled versions of their author, prone to living through events that are described in published accounts of her life and institution and to giving impassioned speeches consisting of points in Browne's pamphlets and magazine articles. The combination of details provided by these sources gives ample insight into Browne's life and work.

This chapter reinterprets the Van Leuven Browne Hospital-School and its role in broader discussions surrounding crippled children, focusing on the significance of personal experience to Browne's methods of care and cure. Historian Brad Byrom uses sources that were published after Browne's time at the institution to suggest that the Van Leuven Browne Hospital-School represents a common trajectory of crippled child care of the period. He highlights the transition from being a "small asylum" to a "hospital-school," using the stories of several residents and former residents published in the Michigan Hospital School Journal in the early 1920s. He

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[45] Among Browne's papers is a letter from Elbert Hubbard II, who in response to a manuscript (likely this one) which she has sent for his review, gently suggests that "you perhaps can make more progress in other lines than writing." Letter from Elbert Hubbard II to Blanche Browne, June 19, 1922, Box 1, Folder 1, Blanche Van Leuven Browne Papers 1898-1981, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (hereafter cited as Browne Papers).

references the Van Leuven Browne Hospital School, among others, as one which "maintained a strong, if not dominant, medical element," though he also explains an uncharacteristic divergence from the typical trajectory by explaining in a footnote that "Most asylums and hospital-schools associated with a surgeon by 1910. Van Leuven Browne delayed its association with orthopedists because of a longstanding commitment to osteopaths."[46]

Upon examining the papers of Van Leuven Browne, however, it becomes clear that commitment to a particular set of medical ideas—loyalty to osteopaths, participation in a widespread suspicion of orthopedists—did not inform the institution's leanings so much as the rejection of outside-expert knowledge in favor of knowledge based on lived experience. The early part of the hospital-school's narrative suggests more divergence from norms of asylums or hospitals than compliance. Far from representing a commitment to standard practices, Browne's methods stemmed from a desire for change rooted in her own childhood and embodiment. Her emphasis was not anti-medical; Browne always had doctors in consult and had friendly relations with various medical professionals, including both allopaths and osteopaths.[47] Nevertheless, this focus on experience eventually led her to become highly critical of surgical interventions that seemed to serve nothing more than a journal article on a new method, a display of expertise for a panel of visiting doctors, or an exciting opportunity to see how well a wound could heal without improving the function of a child's body.

More broadly, Browne's story suggests a range of reactions to changes in medical authority and middle-class reform efforts that go beyond simple compliance or rejection, and her

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[46] Brad Byrom, "A Pupil and a Patient: Hospital-Schools in Progressive America," in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 146,156.
[47] Blanche Van Leuven Browne, *A Story of the Children's Ward*, 1st ed. (Detroit: The Van Leuven Browne Publishing Co., 1906), 13, courtesy of HathiTrust; Browne, *Story,* 2nd ed., Preface.

efforts at times confound chronological separations in reform efforts. Like other Progressive institutions, hospital-schools and convalescent homes could exert coercive pressure upon families. Much of the literature on mothering and welfare has highlighted how state agencies, from health departments to welfare boards, and private organizations attempted to make working-class aid recipients comply with particular expectations of respectability and sanitation, even as these clients resisted and manipulated these agencies to achieve their own goals or to preserve their families.[48] Browne's life shows how this situation could be far more muddled—she and her family repeatedly transgressed the boundary between provider and recipient, aid-givers and aid-seekers, and she saw herself as allied with the children she served over doctors, social workers, or even parents. Likewise, her efforts did not perfectly align either with older Victorian forms of charity based on morality or new Progressive reform approaches. In her work, Browne borrowed elements from both; she also registered strong objections to aspects of each of these ideological frameworks. These selections were wholly in service to her tendency to believe in the power of her own experience. They would serve as the bedrock of a more activist tendency within the movement throughout its lifetime.

Blanche Browne's Crippled Childhood, 1881-1905

Blanche Browne was three years old when she went from "perfectly healthy" to "perfectly helpless," losing movement in the right side of her body after contracting polio.[49] Her mother refused to believe doctors' claims that they could do nothing more for her daughter, so she began to work Blanche's muscles—massaging her until she cried, then distracting her with

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[48] For example, Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky, eds., *"Bad" Mothers: The Politics of Blame in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence: Boston, 1880-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).
[49] Untitled personal narrative, circa 1918, Box 1, Folder 1, 1, Browne Papers.

play until she laughed, then beginning the cycle anew. Blanche’s mobility improved from these treatments until she could lift her head, grasp objects in her right hand, and move around the house with the aid of furniture to stabilize her. This success led her mother to contemplate what skilled medical care might be able to accomplish. She returned her daughter to the care of doctors, and Browne began a long decade of interaction with hospitals and orthopedists.[50]

Young Blanche found the Children’s Ward at Chicago’s St. Luke’s Hospital a supportive environment with appropriate medical practices. She loved the other children she met and the nurses that cared for them; she remembered the doctors fondly, and the treatments she describes were, at times, uncomfortable, but not painful enough to lament at length. Perhaps the best mark of her satisfaction is her mention that when she opened her institution, she wanted it to be a place “where crippled children might be as happy as we were at St. Luke’s.”[51] Her first novel depicts a pleasant environment filled with friendly doctors and nurses offering helpful treatments and kind words to their patients. In the foreword to the second edition, she thanked one for his care and the other for encouraging and helping her form her hospital-school.[52] The novel even features the main character claiming that patients should be glad to be of scientific interest to doctors: “I never had a doctor yet, and I've had doctors nearly all my life, that I didn't really feel was my friend. Of course, all patients are a study to the doctors. Why shouldn't they be? They ought to be glad if the doctors can learn anything from their case to help the next one by."[53]

She did have two points of criticism of life in the children’s ward. These concerns were not so different from those of professional Progressive-Era child savers; however, her direct

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[50] Untitled personal narrative, circa 1918, Box 1, Folder 1, 2, Browne Papers.

[51] Browne, *Story*, 2nd ed., Preface.

[52] Browne, *Story*, 2nd ed., Preface.

[53] Browne, *Story,* 1st ed., 67-68.

experience of these issues shaped the ways in which she responded to them in her own work.[54] Most significantly, entering the hospital interrupted children's education. Browne loved reading and writing and knowing things, claiming, "My very earliest desire was a longing to express my thoughts on paper or slate."[55] Yet the limited options available led to a disjointed education for her, and she struggled through eleventh grade before ending her traditional schooling at twenty-one.[56] Part of her difficulty stemmed from constant interruptions in her schooling. It was uncommon to have education available in a hospital during this period. She later told the Detroit Free Press that young disabled scholars of all social classes generally found themselves in one of two predicaments: either they continually struggled to catch up with their academic peers in a time when many complained that schoolchildren were already overworked, or their parents would keep them from school because they believed a disabled child would have no use for education.[57] Browne's two works set in the children's ward reference no formal lessons, instead featuring several characters who worry about falling behind in school while they are there or look forward to returning to school.[58] In lieu of classes, protagonist Mary leads the children in a variety of educational activities and games, from playing kings and queens to lecturing on the story of Jesus and then engaging them in a seminar discussion on Christian theology.[59] Browne probably cultivated her talents as a leader and educator in a similar fashion during these years. The children she portrayed in the children's ward not only lacked education but craved it, and they undertook to provide it for themselves if necessary.

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[54] Lisa J. Pruitt, "The Heritage Craft Schools and Hospitals for Crippled Children," *Hektoen International Journal*, Spring 2016, https://hekint.org/2017/02/23/3607-2/.
[55] Blanche Van Leuven Browne, "Writing for Kindergarten Children," *Detroit Free Press*, May 28, 1911.
[56] Untitled narrative, Plans and Notes Before 1918 book, circa 1918, Box 1, Folder 8, 108, Browne Papers.
[57] "Aids Helpless Maimed," *Detroit Free Press*, October 20, 1907.
[58] Browne, *A Story of the Children's Ward*, 1st ed., 68-69, 239, 251.
[59] Browne, *Easter in the Children's Ward* (Detroit: The Van Leuven Browne Publishing Co., 1906).

The other problem with the children's ward was social: the recurring loss of contact both among children and between the children and the institution and its representatives. Children stayed long enough to form relationships with doctors, nurses, and one another, but then left abruptly when treatment was deemed complete. *Story of the Children's Ward* is a litany of comings and goings, and many times a departure is punctuated with an observation by the main character that she will likely never see that person again, whether it be another child or a beloved nurse moved to another ward or a different city.[60] Browne lamented the loss of these connections. The difficulty of this went beyond emotional pain. Many institutions had no attachment or responsibility for children after they left the grounds. Whether cured, improved, or worsened, children left most hospitals without access to follow-up help, particularly regarding education or employment. Instead of a home, the hospital was a stopping place, a crossroads that broke up a child's life irreparably. Browne wanted crippled children to have a home— as her contemporary Robert Frost put it, "the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in."[61] In Browne's eyes, a home appreciated the individuality and personhood of its members. It fostered familial connections between its members. It took responsibility for its members even after they left home to make their way in the world. Hospital life ripped a young person from their existing home, took up vast quantities of their time, and offered in return none of these qualities of a home and family that she held dear.

Her observations of these deficiencies made her determined to correct them in her life's work. Upon her departure from her last hospital stay—lasting eleven months of her seventeenth year of life— she returned to her parents' home and immediately wrote *Story of the Children's*

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[60] Browne, *A Story of the Children's Ward,"* 1st ed., 92, 126.

[61] Robert Frost, "The Death of the Hired Man," in *North of Boston* (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1915), 20. https://archive.org/details/northboston02frosgoog/.

Ward. It seems that her own home life interfered for a time, however. Her published narratives fill the period between age seventeen and age twenty-four with preparations, observing and aiding trained nurses in crippled child care.[62] However, her private letters with friend and noted local socialist Jo Labadie suggest that Browne's own home life may have also motivated her ideas of what a home and family should be and honed her skill for caretaking. As she wrote to Labadie in 1919, "I don't think any daughter ever lived who has suffered more with her parents than I have thru mine."[63] Blanche and her father cared for Blanche's "insane" mother, Esther Browne, at home, much the same way that Esther had cared for Blanche at the onset of her disablement. It is unclear when Esther began showing signs of mental illness or what, exactly, her symptoms were. The entire family shrouded the issue in secrecy: Blanche "was so loyal to her I never told a soul her true condition. Neither did father."[64] After seven years, Esther was committed to a mental institution. She remained there until at least 1919, when Blanche mentioned that "the best woman I ever knew—is still in the asylum at Pontiac & I wish to God she had died before she went there."[65] This story did not make the official narratives that Browne used to promote her project, but it undoubtedly shaped her strong sense of herself as a caretaker and her loyalty to her pupil-patients, knowing that institutions held not just human material, but actual people, who needed care.

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[62] Blanche Van Leuven Browne, *A Story of the Children's Ward*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: The Van Leuven Browne Publishing Co., 1911), Preface.
[63] Blanche Van Leuven Browne to Jo Labadie, June 24, 1919, folder 61, box 1, Jo Labadie Papers, 1880-1931, Special Collections Archival and Manuscript Collections, University of Michigan Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (hereafter cited as Labadie Papers).
[64] Browne to Jo Labadie, June 24, 1919, Labadie Papers.
[65] Browne to Jo Labadie, June 24, 1919, Labadie Papers.

Making and Sustaining a Home: 1905-1914

When Browne opened the Van Leuven Browne Hospital School in June 1907, she started with one child, furnishings borrowed from supporters, and five rooms to hold them. By 1916, she had cared for 185 children, raised enough money to buy a $50,000 home to house them, and had attracted the attention of national magazines and prominent politicians.[66] So how did Browne turn her experiences into expertise and the opportunity to practice that expertise? Her use of print culture, her approach to defining the crippled child, and her determination to foster education and a homelike atmosphere for her charges were all predicated on her own experience, each activity approached from the vantage point of a former crippled child.

First, she used her own experiences as narratives to drum up funds and support for her dream institution. Even as a teenager, Browne knew her knowledge formed as a patient was valuable, as the anecdote which opens this chapter suggests. When she decided it was time to pursue opening an institution, Browne knew she needed to attract interest and accrue money to make her dream a reality. She chose to pursue both goals by novelizing the childhood years that she spent in Chicago's St. Luke's Hospital. *A Story of the Children's Ward* and *Easter in the Children's Ward* were both published in the hope that they would fund her preparation to open this institution. Browne also placed her expertise at the forefront of her calls to action. As she traveled Detroit seeking customers for her magazine subscription business, she also attempted to win them as supporters, telling them the story of her crippled childhood.[67] These narratives were not merely sentimental tales designed to wring coins from tight pockets; Browne also emphasized that these events were the source of her knowledge about who crippled children

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[66] Clipping from *Writer's Monthly*, circa 1916, Box 1, Folder 5; "The President Praises Work of Magazine" and "A Plea for Crippled Children," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, December 1915, 2-5; both from Browne Papers.
[67] Browne, "My Work for Crippled Children," 78.

were and what they needed. Throughout her life, she explained her goals and her work many times, in writing, speech, conversations, and interviews. Always, she included her childhood experience to introduce both her motivations and her qualifications to undertake the work. In fact, in many of her pieces, Browne spent far more time on her childhood experiences than discussing how she founded the hospital-school, even in pieces that were specifically about the hospital-school.[68]

Her passion drew support, inspiring loving coverage in local press and confidence from benefactors. She was proficient at leveraging media coverage to build public interest. Local and national publications carried her writing on her work and her experiences. Several times she appeared in articles that quoted her for almost the entire duration of the piece—little commentary from the reporter or other sources, just a long chain of quotations from Browne.[69] After the home opened, reporters visited the hospital school and wrote inspirational pieces about its young residents, like Hazel Welch, a girl who at one point had been considered so near death that her mother had sewed her "an exquisite little white dress for a shroud."[70] By the time of the reporter's visit, she was recovered and dancing outside, wearing the dress her mother had intended for her burial. Browne later wrote that the story was true, had been especially well received in Hazel's hometown, and "brought me a check for $100 the next day."[71] Press treatments of Browne, her institution, and her flock of plucky children repeatedly brought dividends for Browne and her hospital-school in the form of contributions from near and far.

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[68] Many of these appear in Plans and Notes Before 1918 book, circa 1918, Box 1, Folder 8, Browne Papers.

[69] "Blanche Van Leuven Browne, Crippled, Wan, Asks for Aid." *Detroit Free Press*, Feb 26, 1911; to a lesser extent, "Aids Helpless Maimed," *Detroit Free Press*, October 20, 1907.

[70] In an unusual divergence, Hazel's mobility issues were attributed not to orthopedic causes but to hysteria as an explanation for why they cleared up so easily and perhaps a nod to why the doctors were so mystified. "Dances Gleefully in Dress Prepared to Be Her Shroud," *Detroit Free Press*, Oct. 23, 1909, 1; Browne, "My Work for Crippled Children," 79-80.

[71] Browne, "My Work for Crippled Children," 79.

Her proficiency over the press even helped her avoid legal trouble, as her projects butted up against widespread social aversion to people with disabilities. The institution's neighbors began to rumble against the presence of disabled children in their neighborhood. In an incident that highlighted Browne's press savvy and influence, the *Detroit Free Press* reported on the discontent in a way that favored her. She told the reporter a secondhand tidbit she had heard: E.E. Andrews, at 149 Woodland Avenue, had declared, "I would rather walk three blocks out of my way than pass a home for crippled children." P.J. Willson, the leaseholder for the new home of the Van Leuven Browne Hospital-School and owner of both a home and several stores in the neighborhood, met with threats of boycott from his neighbors over the hospital-school. One of his neighbors showed up at Willson's store, demanding that he cancel the VLBHS lease, or he would cease to shop at Willson's establishments.

"Why, you can't get along without the stores," said Willson.

The neighbor was incensed. "I would rather go to Canada for my provisions than patronize you under present conditions."

"Go to Mexico if you want to," Willson replied.

"You can go to ----!" replied the irate man.

Regardless of the veracity of these interactions, the article that reported them made detractors look irrationally infuriated, while not only building sympathy for Browne's side but also offering her the position of rationality in the debate.

Browne traded upon eugenic rationality to get readers and journalists on her side. The article juxtaposes the heated dialogue with Browne's plainspoken explanation that the home takes no imbeciles or incurables, and thus she cannot see what all the fuss is about; in closing, it notes that a committee of the home "will again meet the enemy" the next week.[72] By separating her charges from intellectually disabled children, she made her work seem responsible, sensible, and scientifically sound (while, of course, shoring up a negative impression of other varieties of disability). The victory this represented for her side was evident to Browne. As she later reflected in *World's Work* magazine, when the "esthetic sensibilities of a neighborhood were bruised at the sight of physically sub-normal children playing out on the lawn or about the porch of the house," the newspaper coverage quelched the objections of Browne's neighbors through light mockery. By "pok[ing] good natured fun" at these complainers, the articles discouraged legal entanglements that might have left Browne and the children homeless.[73]

Eventually, she was not content merely to sell her writing to mainstream publications or to let others write about her. In 1908 Browne launched a companion organ to the Van Leuven Browne Hospital-School—the *Hospital School Journal*, which she soon retitled *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*.[74] In it, she told her own story, gave voice to her opinions about crippled child care, featured children from the VLBHS, and reprinted useful, related, or inspiring tidbits from other publications. Her purpose, as she laid out in an early issue, was twofold: both to publicize her institution and to promote the formation of similar institutions across the nation.[75]

Overall, Browne's use of the press both evoked and challenged older images of disability based on pity and charity. Browne was not afraid to use narratives of disabled helplessness to manipulate public sympathies—one *Detroit Free Press* article in 1911 highlighted her powerlessness, titled "Blanche Van Leuven Browne, Crippled, Wan, Asks for Aid." The piece

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[72] "Residents Sore at Browne Home," *Detroit Free Press*, March 4, 1909.
[73] Browne, "My Work for Crippled Children," 77-81.
[74] Browne, "One of the Discarded," Plans and Notes Before 1918 book, circa 1917, Box 1, Folder 8, 15, Browne Papers.
[75] *The Hospital School Journal*, April, May and June, 1910. Box 2, Folder 2, n.p., Browne Papers.

emphasized her smallness, her weakness, and her need. However, she was also principled about avoiding such framings of the children in the media, especially in images. She explicitly noted that "No picture for publications that may shame the child or its relatives should be made. Nothing should be done with any child that will reflect upon it or cause regret in afteryears."[76] Kids should be well dressed "so as to hide deformity as much as possible. No appeal should be made at the expense of a child-soul."[77] The Van Leuven Browne Magazine published photos of the children that looked more like formal individual or family portraits or class photos than they did medical or philanthropic photos, which both tended to incorporate side-by-side comparisons to show improvements in bodies, cleanliness, or attitude. In some ways, the Van Leuven Browne Magazine was akin to a family album or scrapbook, documenting the burgeoning flock upon which "Mother Browne" doted. For Browne, displaying disability that could be hidden was not honesty but rather exploitation, pulling givers' gaze to pity rather than to understanding.

Browne's approach offered a strong counterpoint to Victorian-era representations of children with disabilities, which played on the naïve goodness of the child and the pathos of their bodies. Disability theorist Rosemarie Garland-Thompson has noted that such fictional representations tend to erase all humanity from disabled characters, asking, "What would happen to the pure pity generated for Tiny Tim if he were portrayed as sometimes naughty, like a 'normal' child?"[78] Browne's children answer this question, as these children had no use for pity; they were always beloved, but sometimes also wholesomely naughty or silly in the public eye.[79] Browne wanted these stories to inspire not pity, but care and confidence in these children's

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[76] Browne, "Foundation Principles of Blanche Van Leuven Browne's Work," n.d., Box 1, Folder 1, 2, Browne Papers.
[77] Browne, "Foundation Principles," 2.
[78] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 12.
[79] For example, A.T.P., "Little Tootsie," *Hospital School Journal*, April, May and June, 1910., n.p. Box 2, Folder 2, Browne Papers.

futures. Rather than inspirational stories or sympathetic images, Browne preferred the children to be known through their personalities and their achievements in scholarship or citizenship. She mentioned their diagnoses and treatments, but she delighted in showcasing their ideas and activities. In a September 1913 issue, for example, the *Van Leuven Browne Magazine* reported that several of its students had started The Do It Well Club, an organization "by children, for children" designed to forge connections between crippled children across the nation.[80] Notes about this club recur for the next several years, as the club added and lost members, undertook activities, and received mail from other crippled children (discussed further in chapter three). Pieces about the children in the magazine throughout its run often include minutia about the schoolwork or daily conversations of children at the hospital-school.

Browne also relied on experience in formulating how her home would run. She promised to improve upon existing mechanisms of aid. Her interest in the child was not so different from other "child saving" societies and organizations. She would not have disagreed with the central convictions of child-saving movements: that children were the key sufferers of the ills of modern problems stemming from industrialization and urbanization, and that childhood was a time of malleability.[81] Like other welfare societies and charity organizations in this vein, she was concerned with the welfare of children and less interested in their parents. They had little interest in either helping or chastising parents—they simply wanted them to entrust their children to the experts and get out of the way. Browne uttered the ultimate culmination of this idea in 1928, claiming that "The INSTITUTION is the MOTHER, but the STATE is the FATHER of ALL

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[80] "The Do It Well Club," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, September 1913, Box 2, Folder 7, 4, Browne Papers.

[81] Richard A. Meckel, *Classrooms and Clinics: Urban Schools and the Protection and Promotion of Child Health, 1870-1930* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 94-95; Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 117-119.

CRIPPLES."[82] Unlike these other child-savers, however, Browne offered a unique source for her expertise—her experience as the sort of child she now hoped to help.

Browne's experience of being a crippled child directly informed the goals and priorities of her work, in ways that clashed both with standard practices of welfare organizations and Progressive reformers and with more Victorian conceptions of disability and charity. As she began to develop her ideas, she became disgusted with the existing philanthropic mechanisms available to crippled children. Both state services and private charities, informed by a Progressive investment in order and self-sufficiency, worried about doling out charity in the right measure to the right people and so instituted screening methods and divisions of labor to regulate aid. Private charities were particularly rampant during this period, and each was concerned with proving that they did not duplicate the efforts of any others. Duplication of effort was such a common concern that charity organization societies sprang up around the country, pledging to use their time and efforts to make sure that no effort was duplicated or wasted of the local charities—a charity for charities.[83] Charity organization societies' work mostly involved screening applicants to determine their worthiness for aid and, if approved, matching them with the organization best suited to their needs. The approach of these societies was to funnel and refer—and, on occasion, to suspect and to deny. They claimed their goals were primarily to ascertain what kind of aid would be best for each family and not to weed out the undeserving—in an evocative passage, C.M. Hubbard once claimed the mission of Cincinnati's Associated

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[82] Letter from Blanche Van Leuven Browne to Esther Martin, April 5, 1928, Box 1, Folder 1, Browne Papers.
[83] Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, 73-74

Charities to be akin to that of a doctor who can diagnose malingering but does not take it as his first office.[84]

Browne saw these procedures as more akin to unnecessary and dangerous gatekeeping than sound medical practice. She found these trends of evaluating and information collecting contemptible, particularly screenings which looked to the parents' character to determine whether a child would receive aid. "I have studied the methods of many institutions and have been appalled by the disaster which that deadly thing called red tape works so often," she told the *Detroit Free Press* in 1911. "I won't have it kill the work I am giving up my life to accomplish, they talk about thwarting the designs of unworthy applicants for charity by investigation. It's absurd. How can a child be unworthy."[85] Her distaste for red tape developed into a belief that the responsibility for children was collective and national. When later formulating ideas for institutional policies, Browne said that an inquiry on the parents to determine their ability to pay might be acceptable. However, she also noted that "the decision as to how much to pay should be left to them. The children belong to all of us… The state should provide for them in all ways and pay the mothers who are willing and capable to care for their children."[86] Any information collected would not change the obligation of the collective to all children.

Similarly, she despised the Progressive ideals of uniformity and efficiency at the expense of comfort for the children in her care. Reflecting on her own experiences in the children's ward, she referenced the viciousness of her enemy "red tape" again:

> I remember with a shudder seeing the toys taken from a very sick child because visitors were expected and the battered playthings looked mussy on the spotless bed. Nor did they bother to return the toys when the fastidious visitors were gone. And it doesn't soften the

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[84] C.M. Hubbard, "Instances of Practical Work of the Associated Charities of Cincinnati," in S. Louise Patteson, *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Ohio State Conference of Charities and Correction, Held at Delaware, Ohio, October 15th-18th, 1895* (Columbus, OH: Westbote Co. State Printers, 1896), 44- 45.

[85] "Says Detroit is Generous City," *Detroit Free Press*, Oct 5, 1911.

[86] Browne, "Foundation Principles," 2.

> picture to remember that the child died a few days afterward. This was an institution famed and praised for the perfect clockwork system by which it was run. But red tape and system are a monster into whose maw many a little child's happiness is fed.[87]

Efficiency and meticulousness could be useful for institutions to practice, but she warned that charities and welfare workers often pursued them at the expense of children's joy and healing.

Browne's rejection of certain Progressive ideals should not suggest that her approach was an old-fashioned one, as some contemporaries claimed.[88] The atmosphere of her institution was homelike, but she was also inspired to promote change. She reacted against the old idea that children with disabilities merely needed caretaking either because they were to die soon or would be confined to bed and so had no need for knowledge. This was not the case for most crippled children, Browne insisted; rather, the issue was that the child in this state had been made overly comfortable and given no training or education, and so they were not only entirely spoiled but also physically incapable of doing many intellectual and physical tasks that would have been possible if trained early in their convalescence or their youth.[89]

As this discussion about capacity might suggest, one of Browne's critical contributions was to claim a need to identify what kind of child constituted a "crippled child" and to form this definition primarily in terms of capabilities rather than medical terminology. This rhetorical task would continue throughout the movement's tenure. For Browne, crippled children had *worth*, and this worth went beyond earning capacity, self-sufficiency, or rehabilitative potentials. They also had intellectual worth; she decried "the wasting of valuable brains" that their marginalization represented.[90] By emphasizing their capability, she emphasized their rights and

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[87] Browne, "My Work for Crippled Children," 81.

[88] Social worker Edith Reeves called the VLB Hospital School similar to an asylum. Reeves, *Care and Education of Crippled Children in the United States*, 165.

[89] Browne, "Shall We Draft the Cripple?" Plans and Notes Since 1918, circa 1917, Box 1, Folder 8, 80-81, Browne Papers.

[90] "Aids Helpless Maimed."

the community's responsibilities to them rather than the ways they could be medically treated. Her focus was thus not on defining what medical impairments constituted crippling; instead, it was more about highlighting what the crippled child was not, what the crippled child could do, and what was best for the crippled child. The public should know what the children she cared for were capable of achieving.

Gender distinction was critical to Browne's ideology, a marker of appropriate education and an ability to fit into society with nondisabled people. Disability has historically forced a reckoning with its potential to threaten prevailing gender norms, as it often changed the dynamics surrounding work and home life as well as impacting the ways that gendered bodies interacted with one another.[91] As historians have argued, conceptions of gender distinction were linked to civilized status at the turn of the century. If a society or group had differing roles for men and women, then that society or group was more civilized; less distinction between genders in daily routines meant that a group was less capable or deserving of political power and less evolved.[92] For Browne to prove that her charges were civilized—that they could become adults in nondisabled American society—she needed to encourage them to distinguish themselves by gender.

Manliness was especially relevant, as Browne wanted her boys to grow up to be capable, masculine men. As Bederman has suggested, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was

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[91] Audra Jennings, "Engendering and Regendering Disability: Gender and Disability Activism in Postwar America," in *Disability Histories*, ed. Susan Burch and Michael A. Rembis (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 345–63; Catherine J. Kudlick, "The Outlook of *The Problem* and the Problem with *The Outlook*: Two Advocacy Journals Reinvent Blind People in Turn-of-the-Century America," in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 187–213; Nielsen, *The Radical Lives of Helen Keller*.

[92] Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 – 1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 25. The contradictions and manipulations of this conflict in the lives of White women reformers and activists are explored in Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

a period in which cultural notions of manhood restructured. The Progressive era and the growth of the crippled children's movement occurred alongside what some historians have termed a crisis of masculinity, as shifts in the practices of capitalism made it harder for men to practice self-reliant middle-class masculinity through their careers; challenges from women, working-class men, and immigrants led to fears of weakness and loss of virility among the American middle-class male population.[93] Theodore Roosevelt reshaped himself into the model of virile American manhood by linking masculinity to civilization.[94] Theodore Roosevelt's views on manliness seem to have struck a chord with Browne—she saved a clipping of his comments to a group of Boy Scouts about appropriate comportment for boys, which included efficiency, consideration for others, and the ability to "hold his own."[95] In this piece, Roosevelt says he has "no use for mollycoddles." Later, telling a story about a man criticizing her for allowing her boys to read the newspaper with its ads for liquor and tobacco, she used this same word: "What kind of molly coddles do (sic) [you] think I mean to send out into the world? My boys will be men."[96] She was so concerned about raising boys into men that her book of plans and notes included "The Moral Platform on Which the Van Leuven Browne Boys Stand," which denoted their knowledge of and regard for the body, nature, and the power of married love; their renunciation of "evil habits" surrounding sex, alcohol, and tobacco; their commitment to honesty and helping other boys to live clean and moral lives.[97] Practical ways she encouraged this in the home included starting the world's first troop of crippled boy scouts, soon joined by a troop of crippled Camp Fire Girls.[98] She would later develop this into an argument she titled "Conscription for

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[93] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 13-14.
[94] Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization,* 171.
[95] "Theodore Roosevelt Sends Message to Boy Scouts," Day Book, n.d., Box 1, Folder 9, 25, Browne Papers.
[96] Untitled personal narrative, n.d., Box 1, Folder 1, 7, Browne Papers.
[97] "The Moral Platform on Which the Van Leuven Browne Boys Stand," n.d., Plans and Notes Since 1918, n.d., Box 1, Folder 8, 18-19, Browne Papers.
[98] Browne, "One of the Discarded," 17.

Cripples," in which she used the evidence of the Boy Scouts in her care to argue that the government should conscript disabled men as farmers in service of the nation.[99]

For girls in her care, the gendering was a bit gentler; Browne's lessons for them focused on the need to be pleasant in order to be loved. In her unpublished novel, protagonist Christine Harris instructed one of the girls in her care that disobedience had stark consequences for a disabled girl, as she was dependent on the kindness of others: "If a little girl is a cripple that is no reason for her to be allowed to behave selfishly and unjustly. If she is a cripple and has to be waited on more than other children then that is all the more reason for her to be always sweet tempered and kind to everybody, and she should be taught to be obedient and not make any more trouble than she can help."[100] Of course, gendered expectations for disabled women often conflicted with the need of many to earn their own money. Perhaps because of this complication, as well as the societal expectations that disabled men were weak and effeminate, Browne seemed far more concerned with instilling masculinity in boys than femininity in girls. Appropriately gendered behavior marked a disabled child as a future adult who had the potential to participate in mainstream public and private life, whether that be through masculine self-sufficiency, feminine charm, or an appropriately winsome combination of the two.

If gender distinction promised to be liberatory for the crippled child, Browne held class distinctions less important. Physical impairments could occur regardless of class, and her hospital-school was open to both paying and nonpaying children. A disability could, in fact, be more stultifying to a child in a wealthy family, who could be coddled and kept uneducated, than to a child in a poor family, who generally needed to figure out some way to contribute to the

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[99] Browne, "Conscription for Cripples," n.d., Box 1, Folder 8, 82, Browne Papers.
[100] Browne, "The Skimmings of the Cauldron, or That Which Boiled Over," n.d., Box 2, Folder 3, 147, Browne Papers.

family purse and thus at least learned some simple trade or skill.[101] Children of any class could benefit from the education and homelike atmosphere offered at the Van Leuven Browne Hospital-School. This class element also helps to set her model apart from a philanthropic asylum or convalescent home. Browne believed that her institution was not just a custodial stopgap for inattentive or unavailable parents; it was, in fact, the best a child could get.

"Crippled childhood" in the VLBHS also excluded most children of color, although Browne never explicitly theorized this exclusion and occasionally subverted it. The demographic makeup of Detroit and surrounding areas in the 1900s and 1910s limited the potential for racial integration in Browne's work; census data registered the city as nearly 99 percent White, and the historical record offers no indication that any Black, Asian American, or Latinx children ever applied for admission.[102] Furthermore, the VLBHS ostensibly limited admission to White children, at least according to the bylaws created several years after the institution opened.[103] This sort of restriction was a common feature of early twentieth-century progressive education efforts, many of which claimed to unite people across class while maintaining racial separation.[104] However, Browne's fiction positively depicted an integrated children's ward; official documents also suggest Browne allowed at least two Indigenous children into the VLBHS.[105] These children were simply recorded as "Indian" in census and intake documents; no specific information about which nations they may have been affiliated with survives. It is

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[101] Browne, "My Work for Crippled Children," 78.

[102] Table 23, "Michigan—Race and Hispanic Origin for Selected Cities and Other Places: Earliest Census to 1990," in Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, *Historical Census Statistics On Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, For Large Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States* (Washington, DC: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Feb. 2005), https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/twps0076.html.

[103] *Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, July, Aug., Sept. 1911, 13-14, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers.

[104] For example, see Daniel Perlstein, "Community and Democracy in American Schools: Arthurdale and the Fate of Progressive Education," *Teachers College Record* 97, no. 4 (Summer 1996), 637.

[105] Browne, *A Story of the Children's Ward*; US Census Bureau, *Thirteenth Census*, of the United States, 1910.; and Record Book, 67.

slightly mystifying that these children could be considered both White enough to attend an institution whose bylaws theoretically excluded them but also “Indian” enough to be labeled thus in the US Census or the institution’s record books.[106] One potential answer lies in Browne’s hatred of “red tape,” the formalities that restricted both philanthropists and their clients from the mission of improving society.[107] The concept of institutional bylaws was likely more important to the board of trustees that Browne had acquired by this point than to Browne, whose papers show little evidence of interest in either fully barring or fully welcoming children of color into the VLBHS but whose tolerance for restrictions or oversight by others was quite low. Thus, I suspect that admitting these two “Indian” children was one in a long line of examples of Browne taking the actions she thought best and ignoring official policies.

The little evidence we have on Browne’s personal viewpoints stems from her writing and suggests her tentative interest in issues of intolerance. Her writings indicate an interest in themes of access and discrimination. Her unpublished novel *The Skimmings of the Cauldron* began with one of her two protagonists combatting anti-Semitism in her neighborhood. Her protagonist argued fervently in favor of her Jewish neighbors—though the centrality of this storyline was perhaps partly due to the indications later in the book that a few Jewish businessmen were influential in driving her out of her position in Detroit.[108] Perhaps the book intended to make clear that her criticism of them had nothing to do with their religion but was solely about their opposition to her ideas. This is especially so when we consider the presence of the character of Baby Neddy in Browne’s first work, *Story of the Children’s Ward*. Neddy embodies elements of a racist “pickaninny” caricature, to be sure, but one who exists alone among White children in

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[106] Perhaps this could also be seen through the lens of “optimistic” assimilation, though this does not entirely fit with the time in which Browne was living and working, as discussed in Hoxie, *A Final Promise.*

[107] "Says Detroit Is Generous City,” *Detroit Free Press*, Oct. 15, 1911, 3.

[108] Browne, “The Skimmings of the Cauldron, or That Which Boiled Over,” n.d., Box 2, Folder 3, Browne Papers,

the ward with the full approval of seemingly everyone.[109] A picture of Browne as a teenager in St. Luke's hospital shows the Black toddler that was likely the inspiration for this character sitting on the end of her bed.[110] When Browne looked to her past to make a story of her experience, she saw this child as an important character to include.

This should not be taken as a suggestion that Browne was an integrationist or antiracist. Perhaps the best indication of this is her later letters with Jo Labadie. In one 1919 letter, she tells Labadie that the experience of living among blatantly racist neighbors had made her realize that her previous negative views about African Americans were unjustified (although she does not go into great detail about what those views, which she held during her time running the VLBHS, might have been); she marveled at her new willingness to socialize and send her children to play with her Black neighbors up the mountain from her new home.[111] In short, it seems most likely that Browne was blasé about racial integration within her educational project—she was not opposed to it but saw no need to pursue it actively either. It was less significant to her than the opportunity to provide care and education to White disabled children, who likely reminded her of herself.

The most significant elements of Browne's ideology of the crippled child focused on what the crippled child was *not*, primarily to highlight that disabled children possessed many useful abilities and strengths. Thus, she noted that the crippled child was not a sick child; the child may have been sick once, but status as a "cripple" was not the same as the status of being "sick."[112] The children she was concerned with were also mentally and intellectually abled—she was clear about the need to exclude "feebleminded" children from her treatment and educational

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[109] For more on caricatures of Black children, see Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*.
[110] Undated photo, Box 2, Folder 1, Browne Papers.
[111] Blanche Van Leuven Browne to Jo Labadie, June 24, 1919, Box 1, Folder 61, Labadie Papers.
[112] Untitled personal narrative, circa 1918, Box 1, Folder 1, 3, Browne Papers.

programs. Such exclusion was necessary, she argued, not just because education would not be beneficial to those children but also because association with them would taint the movement, linking feeblemindedness and crippling even more firmly in the minds of the public than they already were.[113] This assertion was not mere theory but based on her experiences in trying to incorporate several children into her home who did not work out; however, she did note that some children were wrongly labeled feebleminded because of physical disabilities, and those children could benefit from her approach. [114]

The crippled child, then, defined by the converse of these attributes, represented the perfect recipient of the things her own hospital experience lacked: education, personal connection, public confidence in their abilities. They were educable, winsome, and hardy, flourishing when given support for learning, bonding, and life after their stay in the hospital-school concluded, even as the children's ward had offered little intellectual stimulation, opportunity for long-term emotional connection, or support for the long haul of life with a disability after surgical and medical obligations were through. They were children on whom her efforts would not be wasted, children who would blossom physically and intellectually under the proper atmosphere.

Daily Life in the Hospital-School

That atmosphere was what Browne strove to create in the daily life of her institution. The name "hospital-school" connotes a combination hospital and school—however, Browne's iteration was equally concerned with a third category—home. She offered an experience that would improve the things she had found lacking in her own hospital stay: the lack of education

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[113] Letter from Blanche Van Leuven Browne to Esther Martin, April 5, 1928.
[114] Letter from Blanche Van Leuven Browne to Esther Martin, April 5, 1928.

and the easily broken connections between people. To combat the first, the institution needed to be a school; the second required making it as close to a home as possible—a home whose inhabitants cared for one another and whose parental figures would always be linked to their children. In doing this, she radically recentered the practices of the crippled children's institution.

The small size and informal structure meant that Browne could oversee almost everything that happened within the institution. In the early years, the work of the home was done in a semi-informal manner, without much in the way of documentation of employee expectations or training, likely because there were not many employees. An early article showed the extent of her control: "Unable to hire a teacher for them, she does this work herself, helps to cook the meals, nurses them—she has studied nursing—and turns over every cent of her earnings which she doesn't require for her actual support to the hospital-school."[115] She accrued a few employees over the next three years, and the 1910 census shows six adults in residence at 261 Woodland: Blanche, listed as the head of household; her father Jared Browne; head nurse and trusted Browne ally Laura O'Neill; a cook; and two nurses, including a relative of O'Neill's. Browne had also adopted a daughter, one-year-old Esther Browne.[116] These small numbers meant that Browne could communicate her emerging ideas and priorities to her staff directly. Moreover, her listing as head of household showed the extent of her leadership. Her father may have been in residence, but the VLBHS was undoubtedly hers, and she cared for her father just as surely as she cared for her daughter and for the hospital-school's inhabitants.

Browne strove to create an atmosphere of home within the hospital-school, which meant striving to avoid the standardization prevalent in the Progressive-era institution. The children were unified by a group identity, but they were also separate individuals, much as the members

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[115] "Aids Helpless Maimed."
[116] "United States Census, 1910."

of a traditional family were both connected and distinct. Christmas offers an instructive example: Both Browne and Van Leuven Browne supporter Flora Bangs Jackson critiqued the gift-giving habits of Christmastime donors to the institution. Many givers preferred to offer thirty of the same toy instead of investing the same amount of money into a nicer toy, doll, or book that would appeal to the needs of a particular child, despite being asked to do so by staff. Browne and Jackson lamented the waste of having more popcorn than the children could eat in a month, which would go stale overnight, rather than longer-lasting toys for the classroom or a particular favorite item for each child to have as their own special treat.[117] Browne acknowledged the children in the home as individuals, with particular preferences and aptitudes, and attempted to foster their expression and fulfillment.

This individualized focus bore out in pupils' vocational work, which, unlike that of many of the industrial schools, was highly individualized. The VLBHS lacked both the resources and the inclination to establish a large-scale program such as those in the industrial or vocational training schools for her students. Instead, the institution sought opportunities to foster particular talents emergent in each child. The magazine reported the unique qualities of each of Browne's favorites: Tootsie was developing proficiency in music, while other girls practiced sewing or embroidery.[118] Another student completed correspondence courses in various musical instruments.[119] The individualized training of her students, and her celebration of their unique qualities and aptitudes, was likely also informed by her own experience: she had not found her

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[117] Browne, "The Waste in Christmas Giving," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, November-December 1913, Box 2, Folder 7, 7-8, Browne Papers; Flora Bangs Jackson, "Charity That Is Kind," *American Motherhood*, November 1915, Vol XLII, No. 5, 350-351.

[118] Browne, "My Work for Crippled Children," 81.

[119] Letters from Siegel-Myers School of Music to Blanche Browne, April 24, 1915 and October 11, 1915, Box 1, Folder 2, Browne Papers.

calling in working some standardized job, but in using her singular experience to thrive in a path she had forged herself.

Because Browne viewed each child as an individual who had abilities and intellect, she placed a great deal of importance on discovering those capacities, developing them, and showing them to the wider world. This priority meant that the educational methods used at the VLBHS shared commonalities with the approaches of contemporary pedagogical progressives, but were also idiosyncratically pointed toward what Browne thought disabled children needed. The curriculum of the hospital school had much in common with the teaching styles proposed by pedagogical progressives, who wished to reform schooling to meet the needs of students more fully. Educators like Dewey and Montessori rejected the usefulness of lecture, memorization, and other rigid elements of contemporary education, prioritizing self-directed learning and hands-on experience to enhance student understanding and engagement.[120]Although Browne and her employees may have been aware of these famous thinkers, they commonly wrote as though their choices stemmed from their own experiences and ideas of what kind of learning was most useful.[121] In the eyes of other educators, these kinds of activities helped students learn; Browne's school emphasized their role also as a way to strengthen and showcase disabled students' capacity to play roles as citizens.[122]

Education in the Van Leuven Browne Hospital-School was thus practical and directed by Browne's own educational background and the interests of the students. Browne and her colleagues emphasized learning through play and making schoolwork not eight hours of

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[120] Rury, *Education and Social Change,* 127.

[121] For example, Flora Bangs Jackson references Montessori positively in one article. Flora Bangs Jackson, "Something About the School Work," *Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, November-December 1913, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 15-16.

[122] For more on education in the Van Leuven Browne Hospital School, see Duncan, "'Every One of Them Are Worth It."

drudgery but rather a highly prized few hours of effort and reward.[123] The curriculum placed little emphasis on the theoretics of grammar because, Browne noted: “I never understood a word of all the grammar rules I learned until I was fifteen years old and began to study Latin.”[124] Writing instruction for kindergarten, for example, focused on being able to write useful and correct correspondence. Once they had learned the alphabet, the teacher asked the younger children what words they would like to learn to spell, and they picked such favorites as mamma, papa, and the names of the adults and children that surrounded them at the hospital-school. They gradually filled in their knowledge with the words that would allow them to write full sentences, then practiced writing letters each day informed by five simple rules about punctuation and capitalization which would serve them “until they were quite grown up boys and girls in high school.”[125]

Writing instruction was the most important subject because, as suggested by Browne’s earliest memory, writing was not just a practical skill —it was a conduit for expressing ideas, or establishing both a public and a private self. Browne had built support for her ideas by expressing them and having them printed and shared with the broader community. At key points in her life, she wrote her way through problems and plans in personal letters and private journals. She wanted to pass the same route to power to her young charges. The children were encouraged to write their thoughts and share them, as Browne featured them in the Van Leuven Browne Magazine frequently. In the early years, she wrote about the children, quoting things they had said and portraying them as articulate, funny children. She printed their letters to Santa in the last

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[123] Flora Bangs Jackson, “Something About the School Work,” *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, November-December 1913, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 15-16.
[124] Blanche Van Leuven Browne, “Writing for Kindergarten Children.”
[125] Blanche Van Leuven Browne, “Writing for Kindergarten Children.”

issue of 1910.[126] She reported on "What the Children Say" and "Recess Talk," sharing their conversations with readers.[127] By 1911, the Children's Department had a named editor: the thirteen-year-old hip tuberculosis survivor Zella Berry.[128] The magazine began giving more space to pieces authored by children in the Hospital-School. By September of 1913, these had broken out of a Children's Department and were simply letters after the initial editorial; the last issue of that year featured a thereafter recurring section of "Scraps from the Children's Note Books" on subjects ranging from morals to biology to poetry—sometimes in the space of a single entry.[129] In publishing their words in this way, Browne not only filled space within the magazine; she also taught the students the potential power of their words in a public forum.

Part of the innovation of the Van Leuven Browne Hospital-School was its prioritization of this individualized educational achievement over of the medical treatments emphasized by other institutions. One of her most critical innovations from other models of crippled child care was to protect the bodily autonomy of the children in her hospital-school. The case of Billie Jackson provides a strong illustration of her methods. Seven-year-old Billie entered the hospital-school in its early years after his grandmother became interested in Browne's ideas. He and his wealthy parents lived in New York City, a hub of orthopedic care. He had access to the best doctors available, and he and his family tried a variety of medical and surgical treatments to no avail. Much as they had in Blanche Browne's case all those years before, doctors claimed that Billie's recovery was hopeless. The grandmother begged the parents to send Billie to Browne for

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[126] "The Children's Letters to Santa Claus." *The Hospital School Journal*, October, November, December 1910, Box 2, Folder 2, Browne Papers, n.p.
[127] "What the Children Say," April, May, June 1910, and "Recess Talk," October, November, December 1910, both from *The Hospital School Journal*, Box 2, Folder 2, Browne Papers, n.p.
[128] Zella Berry, "The Children's Department," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, July, August, September 1911, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 26; Record Book, n.d., Box 1, Folder 6.
[129] *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, September 1913, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 4-6; "Scraps from the Children's Note Books," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, November and December 1913, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 10-11.

two years, believing she could help him where the doctors had failed. Finally, when all other options seemed exhausted, Billie's parents agreed, believing that he would die in three months and hoping that their halfhearted attempt would at least please the grandmother.

Browne approached his case by first giving him back control of his own body. The boy that Browne encountered reminded her very much of another young man she had met in the hospital when she was a teenager, one who had suffered needlessly at the hands of medical professionals. Informed by this memory, she assured Billie that no doctor would touch him unless he wanted them to check on his abscesses. "I told him that our doctors were just good friends to little boys and girls, and were interested in seeing them get well, so he soon became proud to show his abscesses when the two doctors of the regular school, who have stood by me for years, called to see him."[130] His ability to control when the doctors examined him, and the assurance that they would perform no further operations on him, allowed Billie to trust the doctors at the school and eventually to show them the progress of his healing with pride.

Billie's case also led Browne to question the wisdom of surgical intervention in childhood disabilities. According to Browne, the care she provided involved exposing Billie to the open air and sunshine, and after six years, he was almost completely well. His mother took him to California, where some of his progress abated; he received surgical care there which Browne claimed almost killed him. His mother returned him to Browne's care in 1914.[131] His condition rapidly improved, such that by 1918 Browne wrote, "save for a slight limp I should call him a normal boy."[132] Browne's telling of the case illuminates the progression of her

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[130] Browne, "On the Vivisection of Crippled Children," 1918, Box 2, Folder 4, Browne Papers, n.p.
[131] Record Book, n.d., Box 1, Folder 6.
[132] Browne, "On the Vivisection of Crippled Children", n.p.

approach to healing and served as a compelling argument that natural cures were beneficial for even wealthy families who could afford expensive care.

Although she positioned her goals as inarguably beneficial to society, Browne's work for crippled children was not without controversy. In addition to the ire of neighbors mentioned above, she also received pushback from those who were ostensibly her allies. Being visibly disabled and caring for disabled children could be misinterpreted as dysgenic, irresponsible sexuality, as Felix Shay observed firsthand at a convention day at the Roycroft artistic community.[133] Shay, a Roycrofter and editor of the community's magazine *The Fra*, was approached by "a gossip—they are always with us!" who wanted him to share her judgment of "that Cripple Woman (who) has three Crippled Children! Hereditary influence! She's absolutely guilty! Isn't it awful!"[134] Shay set her straight, telling her—and later, his reading public—the tale of Blanche Van Leuven Browne and her many achievements for her charges, shaming her into tears and penitence. He also, in one of the only extant mentions of Browne's unmarried status, records Browne's words on the subject: "'Twould take a brave man to marry a woman with five legally adopted crippled children!"[135] Browne and her work were subject to interrogation and criticism from outsiders, even and perhaps especially those associated with progressive communities to which she belonged; she and those around her, rather than objecting to the

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[133] Browne's association with Roycroft—an artists' utopian community outside of Buffalo, New York, dedicated to the Arts and Crafts movement and home to progressive events and agitation, yet also marked by founder Elbert Hubbard's eventual distaste for socialism and enthusiasm for capitalist production—was ongoing, and another of the contradictions which characterize Browne's social and political connections. See Jonathan Clancy, "Elbert Hubbard, Transcendentalism and the Arts and Crafts Movement in America," *The Journal of Modern Craft* 2, no. 2 (July 2009): 143–60, https://doi.org/10.2752/174967809X463088. For others who connected crippled children's work to the Arts and Crafts movement (without Browne's disdain for medical experimentation), see Lisa J. Pruitt, "The Heritage Craft Schools and Hospitals for Crippled Children," *Hektoen International Journal*, Spring 2016, https://hekint.org/2017/02/23/3607-2/.

[134] Felix Shay, "Tiny Tim's Mother," *The Fra* XVIII no.3 (December 1916): 82.

[135] Shay, "Tiny Tim's Mother," 82.

eugenic ideals which informed these critiques instead distanced Browne and her charges from those who were "truly" dysgenic.

More pressing than "gossips," however, were conflicts with Browne's backers. She formed and then dismissed two separate boards for the hospital-school before 1911, each under messy circumstances related to the members questioning Browne's qualifications for her position. The women on these boards were "exquisitely dressed, with their quiet, reposeful manners, the insignia of good breeding"; they found Browne suitable to be a "house-mother" who would play with the children; but not the role of manager or superintendent.[136] Ironically, her emphasis on her experience proved a sticky trap—although it gained attention and stoked some confidence in her project, it also highlighted her lack of professional credentials. Members of the philanthropically minded middle-class who made up these boards saw the success she had at gaining public interest and caring for children with disabilities. However, they feared the irregularity of having a woman with no degree and no nursing qualification in charge of an institution for crippled children. Browne owed her success in part to her ability to appeal to these sorts of people with her experiences. But for every success, it seemed, a challenge followed; for every person convinced that her hospital experience was legitimate and useful, there was a detractor who wished her replaced with a medical authority.

Though Browne persevered, dismissing or withdrawing from both boards rather than cave to their demands, the stress took its toll on her physically and mentally. She seems to have tended to get ill in the summers, which she attributed to the accumulated worry over providing for the group through the cold months. In February of 1913, she suffered what she described as a "severe nervous breakdown" and left Detroit for six months. She spent the time recovering at a

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[136] Browne, "My Work for Crippled Children," 79; Blanche Van Leuven Browne, "Editorial," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, July, August, September 1911, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 8.

magnetic healing institute in Missouri, bringing her adopted child with her. She returned by September, a hale and hearty 78 pounds and ready for work.[137] As she wrote chattily to Jo Labadie, "I am sorry, indeed, to know that you have had a nervous breakdown, too, but you will win out. I am very much better and am gaining all the time. I teach school 5 1/2 hrs. a day, edit our magazine and write most of it most of the time and I plan and work and study the rest of the time when I'm not sleeping, I sleep well about seven hours for which I am very thankful."[138]

Ending an Era: 1914-1918

The next several years encapsulated the benefits and challenges facing the Van Leuven Browne Hospital-School. Outside attention, changes in personnel, and Browne's evolving opinions suggested the power and appeal of her approach. Yet as the institution grew in size and prestige, it became harder for Browne to exert control over its methods and mission.

By 1914, the Van Leuven Browne Hospital-School was in an odd position. Locals admired the VLBHS publicly for its successes, and Browne's image had the power to move and motivate donors and volunteers. It was also, quite intentionally, out of step with the trends for both philanthropic and medical approaches to crippled children. The school's differences from other institutions made it difficult for those in the business of classifying such things, such as Edith Reeves, Special Agent of the Russell Sage Foundation's Department of Child-Helping, to put Browne's achievements into perspective. In her pamphlet "Care and Education of Crippled Children in the United States," Reeves did not seem to know what to make of the Van Leuven

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[137] She noted that this was the most she had ever weighed at the time; she would later get up to the nineties. Blanche Van Leuven Browne, "Editorial," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, September 1913, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 3; Blanche Van Leuven Browne, "How I Started the Hospital-School for Crippled Children in Detroit," circa 1913, Plans and Notes Before 1918 book, circa 1918, Box 1, Folder 8, Browne Papers,10; Letter from Blanche Van Leuven Browne to Jo Labadie, December 29, 1921, Labadie Papers.
[138] Letter from Blanche Van Leuven Browne to Jo Labadie, January 9, 1914, Labadie Papers.

Browne Hospital-School. Though on the surface, it shared something in common with the institutions she lauded, it lacked a commitment to medical oversight, which made it slightly suspect. The hospital-school's divergence surfaced first in little details, passages where Reeves wanted to generalize but ran up against differences. For example: "All of the convalescent hospitals or homes, with the exception of the Van Leuven Browne Hospital School, Detroit, have orthopedic surgeons who visit the institutions at frequent intervals…Minor operations only are performed at the VLBHS, Detroit."[139] The main listing for the Home in the directory of the text reveals her confusion further. Under "Class," she notes that the home is "Classed with convalescent hospitals, but in many respects has close resemblance to asylum home."[140] Likewise, Browne's approach to handwork and vocational training was illegible to the Russell Sage Foundation's classification metrics. The listing simply claimed "None"—clearly, the individualized approach to Tootsie's musical talent and Zella's embroidery were not quite what the survey's authors had in mind. Cultivating the unique talents of specific children did not qualify as vocational training. Browne's home, then, fell between the boundaries of the forms of classification that seemed familiar for Progressive medical or welfare institutions.[141]

This lack of coherent Progressive identity made it not just confusing but perhaps, by Reeves' metric, suboptimal. The 1910 Flexner Report, which called for and indeed motivated a sea change in medical training and professionalization in the United States, likely influenced a negative interpretation of any institution deemed insufficiently scientific of professional—Browne's overlap with medical efforts caught her in the midst of a changing set of expectations

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[139] Reeves, "Care and Education of Crippled Children in the United States," 29.

[140] Reeves, "Care and Education of Crippled Children in the United States," 165.

[141] In further inattention to detail, she claims Browne's crippling was caused by spinal tuberculosis, an interesting detail because either these conditions are not distinguishable or not important to Reeves—or, Browne is not important enough to attend to more thoroughly. Reeves, "Care and Education of Crippled Children in the United States," 165.

for a profession of which she did not actually consider herself a member. Consider Reeves' description of the Van Leuven Browne institution's lack of resident orthopedic surgeons in conjunction with her claim, "based upon an acquaintance with all the institutions for crippled children in the United States, that the presence of an absolute standard of efficiency in one direction, that is, medical and surgical care, has brought the interesting result of raising the standard of the institution at almost all other points."[142] In other words, she asserted a correlation between the quality of an institution overall and the quality of its medical and surgical care. An institution that did not have a medical focus would not score high marks with Reeves.

The Russell Sage report's treatment of the institution was not wholly negative. In the home's main listing, the author suggested that the children seemed happy, but the "Comment" at the bottom of the page was decidedly neutral: "The life in this small home is much like that of a large family; there is little to suggest an institution except the number of beds in the sleeping rooms. The children are very much attached to all the people who care for them and good humor prevails."[143] The homelike atmosphere and noninstitutional feel were appealing attributes, but this description contrasts with the cutting edge, medically focused institutions she praises elsewhere in the piece. Flora Bangs Jackson chose to interpret these comments favorably, selecting this passage to quote in the Van Leuven Browne Magazine and claiming it represented Reeves' approval.[144] In context, it seems more complicated than that; the tone of Jackson's piece suggested she may have picked up on that as well, but was determined to find praise in Reeves' words to share with readers.

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[142] Reeves, "Care and Education of Crippled Children in the United States," 38.
[143] Reeves, "Care and Education of Crippled Children in the United States," 165.
[144] Flora Bangs Jackson, "The Crippled—His Care and Education," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, January 1915, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 21.

The year 1915 brought Browne new participants in her mission, both in the hospital-school and the magazine. Polio survivor, author, and wheelchair user Joseph F. Sullivan had appeared in the magazine's pages before. In January of 1915, his piece "The Cripple's Prayer" appeared in the Van Leuven Browne magazine, with an editor's note indicating that Sullivan planned to start a hospital-school similar to Browne's in the South.[145] By May, Sullivan's plans had apparently changed— Sullivan became one of the editors of the magazine, which he briefly rebranded as the official organ of his organization, the United Workers for Cripples, and Sullivan himself began teaching advanced grades at the hospital school.[146] As the next chapter will discuss, Sullivan's arrival was a fateful development that would mark the history of the movement.

Earl Casey also joined the VLBHS teaching staff that year. Casey's employment suggests not only the growth of the Hospital-School enterprise but also one method by which an institution could continue to support its charges into adulthood. By this point, Blanche Browne was teaching only a few specialized classes, such as "psychology, physiology, and parliamentary law."[147] Casey had been a student at the hospital-school for four years, during that time taking music courses through a mail-order company and publishing an imaginative piece in the *Van Leuven Browne Magazine* in the form of a fictional travel narrative called "A Trip Around the World."[148] At the age of seventeen, he transitioned from student to teacher, joining Joe Sullivan and Miss Percius Hill, who taught kindergarten.[149] Casey taught music and advanced grades.[150]

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[145] Joseph Sullivan, "The Cripple's Prayer," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, January 1915, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 5-6.
[146] *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, May-June 1915, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers.
[147] "School for Crippled Children Start Year," *Detroit Free Press*, September 15, 1915.
[148] Earl Casey, "A Trip Around the World," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, May-June 1915, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 26-28; Letters from Siegel-Myers School of Music to Blanche Browne.
[149] "School for Crippled Children Start Year."
[150] "Van Leuven Browne Hospital School Will Raise $200,000," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, December 1915, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 6.

Casey was also instrumental in another change that year at the VLBHS—the summer camp. At his suggestion, Browne took the children of the home to Port Huron, Michigan, to camp out all summer.[151] The camp had multiple benefits—letting disabled children have an invigorating outdoor experience, receiving the health benefits of fresh air and sunshine. The camp also allowed children the practice of governing themselves and taking responsibility for the success of the group. The children crafted their own list of rules, which they posted on a tree; the then- "oldest boy in camp" Earl Casey served as the adjudicator of any disputes or rulebreaking. Browne's business manager was Joe Harper, a fourteen-year-old boy "scarcely as high as a tall man's knees" who handled orders, errands, and supplies for the camp.[152] Summerlong camping thereafter became a regular part of her practice—setting up tents to live in through most summers for health and, later, cost-savings.

The year's most significant source of challenge and change came near its end: a plan to move the institution outside of the city of Detroit and expand it into an "educational colony." The move would expand the hospital school into a new and vast setting, featuring an isolation hospital, cottages for living in, and farmland for working, allowing her to treat, educate, and house many more children. Such a deal would have to bring compromise. The number of children cared for would be increased, but the bureaucracy would grow right along with it.

Browne was so enthusiastic about this plan that she made a life-altering decision. After a decade of resisting external control, she signed ownership of the hospital-school and the camp over to yet another board. In exchange, they promised her continued control of the everyday: "It was understood that I should retain the Superintendency and that my methods of education and

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[151] Mother Blanche, "The First Van Leuven Browne Camp," *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, November 1915, Box 2, Folder 7, Browne Papers, 24.
[152] "Too Busy Having Good Time to Think of Their Physical Ailments," reprint from *Detroit Sunday News Tribune*, July 18, 1915, Box 2, Folder 9, Browne Papers.

treatment should be retained."[153] They would conduct an eight-day campaign, a fundraising style becoming incredibly popular with philanthropic groups nationwide.[154] Organized committees led by captains received lists of potential supporters to call upon, bolstered by a media blitz publicizing the work done so far and the plans for the future.

The new trustees and campaign workers reinterpreted Browne's tenets through more prototypical Progressive and philanthropic lenses. Their materials referenced education, home, and sustained connections, but reworked these ideals to emphasize the ways that each promoted efficiency and independence from the public purse. One fact sheet for campaign volunteers transformed the VLBHS dedication to continued support for crippled children throughout their lives into an assurance that "No child who has been a pupil of this school ever becomes a charge upon the community."[155] What Browne conceived as a long-lasting familial connection—a home to return to—was rendered here as a public service to the nondisabled, a guarantee to the community that they would not be affected by the dependency of their neighbors. Education was likewise in service to this community benefit. Even the materials Browne authored for the campaign emphasized the trade education that would be available in the new home's increased quarters: boys could become "expert farmers" and all could "learn a trade that will make them self-supporting." Education and sustained connection were still important to the project of the institution, but they had been rendered more widely palatable by taking on a cast of Progressive efficiency.

Likewise, the homelike atmosphere of the hospital-school was noted favorably in plans and publicity for the move. Yet the very nature of the campaign's materials and goals proved that

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[153] Browne, "One of the Discarded," 15; Untitled narrative, Plans and Notes Before 1918, 6.
[154] Scott M. Cutlip, *Fund Raising in the United States: Its Role in America's Philanthropy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 73-74.
[155] "Facts for Workers," circa 1915, Box 2, Folder 5, Browne Papers.

the institution would become both more institutional and more medical. Although Browne's writing appears in publicity materials, local media treatment sidelined her involvement in favor of more traditional philanthropic subjects—James Couzens, the generous local politician and donor; the members of the board. When completed, the farm colony would be associated with the Children's Hospital, a pairing which Browne did not personally approve.[156] Campaign materials were also vague about the methods of effecting change within crippled children. Though happy to claim high rates of cure within Browne's home, they frequently leave the methods—largely nonsurgical, even nonmedical—unstated. Each of these facts set the future of the home in a direction far more amenable to traditional philanthropic and medical approaches to disabled children than it had been previously.

Likewise, the campaign turned the role of disabled children's images and experiences to new ends. The *Detroit Free Press* reported on four speakers at a December 7th luncheon at which the women's division of the campaign assembled for final preparations. Two were organizers, one was Joe Sullivan, speaking as a VLBHS instructor, and one was another Joseph— "Little Joe," a student at the Hospital-School. The article reported that despite his presence, the chairwoman "spoke for him his message" about the children's gratefulness for the aid of the community. When she asked if he would like to add anything else, he did: "Yes—and do it well!" The paper reported the incident as a charming lark, with Little Joe serving as an image of a malleable, lovable crippled child rather than as an advocate for himself. It is unclear if the audience assembled appreciated the layered meanings of his instruction. Little Joe was not only claiming his worth and that of his classmates by suggesting the organizers should give the children the consideration of a job well done. He was also evoking the "Do It Well Club," by this

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[156] "Farm Colony for State's Crippled Children," *Detroit Free Press*, Nov 11, 1915; Browne, "The Skimmings of the Cauldron," 213.

time several years old. The club started and fostered by crippled children had maxims that could apply to all—even the assembled audience who found Joe so sentimental and themselves so gracious. Even as the board members and campaign workers attempted to use Joe to stoke a sentimentalist sensibility, Joe claimed the value of the children's own institutions and ideas.

Browne's writings are largely circumspect about the campaign itself. Her fictionalized account of her life and work says only that "the Campaign is a story in itself, while this story deals only with the froth of a drop in the Caldron of Civilization."[157] We can surmise that Browne did not want to go into it—it was too complicated, too painful, and perhaps involved too many compromises for her heroic protagonist. It does not seem to have been immediately successful—the campaign drops quietly out of the local papers long before it met its final goal.

The dream of the educational colony did not fizzle out so quickly, however, and the prospect presented both opportunity and danger. It was what Blanche Browne wanted most, what she had dreamed of—a chance to try out her methods on a larger scale, with the space and resources she needed to do it. But the potential move also came with a stark loss of control. The first threats were to the institutional practices she had created. Multiple buildings and more children would necessitate more division of labor than she had previously enjoyed, and the hierarchies of these positions had to be mapped out. The increase in size also meant she would have less opportunity to observe the nursing staff, and there would be a great deal more of them. She needed to institute a standardized system by which she could evaluate these employees. With greater codification of rules would also come a decreased ability to skirt around them when she wished. All promotions for the campaign, both periodical and pamphlet, note among their meticulously detailed projections and rules that the Educational Colony funded by the $200,000

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[157] Browne, "The Skimmings of the Cauldron," 203.

campaign would be open to all White children. This language had not been absent from earlier materials, but it had been present only sometimes, and as discussed above, adherence to this restriction seems to have been irregular. Browne would have to work harder to assert her wishes over the institution.

In anticipation of this difficulty, Browne laid out extensive plans for these changes from 1915-1918, showing that she intended to maintain and expand the home's focus on creating a homelike, healthful, and educational atmosphere for the children in her care. A list in her notebook highlighted some of her wishes: She wanted a business manager. She wanted her own home, separate from the administration building, and a salary and land enough to support her family of twelve. These two items would presumably allow her to sustain a more homelike atmosphere for her immediate family and help to manage the money issues that had plagued her for the last ten years. Most significantly, she wanted something that represented a natural extension of her determination to foster the voices of people with disabilities: "a Publishing House managed & operated by Cripples & for Cripples."[158] A publishing house would provide a platform for disabled experiences to be distributed, as well as training and jobs for residents in preparation for their adulthood.

In addition to a continuation of these core goals, the materials reflect her continued incorporation of ideas and concerns of her childhood, her experiences as a mother to disabled children, and her emphasis on the power of experience permeated these plans. Browne's plans included many practical rules like "Screens must be used to avoid exposure of patients," rules that she had based on the experience of being the person in the bed.[159] Her training plans made this belief explicit, arguing that experience was the best teacher of crippled children's workers.

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[158] Untitled List, Plans and Notes Before 1918, 50.

[159] Browne, "The House Rules," Plans and Notes Before 1918, 39.

In a document designed for worker training, she noted that the children would be the best teachers in the subject of dealing with crippled children and allied herself clearly with the children and their interests.[160] This concern for the children, as well as a determination to exercise her right to rule the institution, led to language governing employee behavior which seems absurdly broad. Perhaps the 1917 "Policy of Van Leuven Browne Regarding Employees" would alert a new nurse to some of the power dynamics at play in the home, with its first point demanding, simply, "Absolute, unquestioning loyalty and obedience." [161] Employees could leave at any point they wished. However, they could not expect a lavish recommendation at the end of their tenure at the hospital-school—just a simple card which rated their qualities such as obedience, disposition, and influence on a scale from one to seven. If they were fired, they would receive no reason for such; only a notice, one week's pay, and instructions to vacate within 24 hours.[162]

Perhaps some of this suspicion of her employees grew from her increasing skepticism of prevailing medical approaches to children with disabilities. Unfortunately for Browne, the campaign's shifts toward a more medical and philanthropic angle on her work came precisely when she was moving further from these modes of thinking. Browne's recordkeeping practices and surviving writing from this period show how her thinking shifted to solidify the category of the crippled child and to question the usefulness of orthopedic surgery. These ideological shifts ultimately culminated in a total disavowal of casts and surgery for crippled children.

Records of the home suggest that some divisions took on greater importance in Browne's mind. It is unlikely that the single surviving intake book contains records of all children that

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[160] Browne, "Opening Address to Adult Pupil," Plans and Notes Before 1918, 1.
[161] Browne, "Policy of Van Leuven Browne Regarding Employees," Plans and Notes Before 1918, 46.
[162] Browne, "Policy of Van Leuven Browne Regarding Employees," Plans and Notes Before 1918, 46.

passed through the home, particularly since census records indicate the presence of some children never recorded in the book. However, its records do allow us to trace some linguistic and methodological trends of Browne's efforts. First, the book shows that Browne repeatedly tried to incorporate children who were "feebleminded" or "dull" into her curative project—but often sent them packing after a brief trial period. She also sent away those who were simply "incurable"—unfortunately, she does not go into great detail about what this meant to her—or those who were "bad boy[s]." One child she discharged because his "Parents refused to abide by rules."[163]She was, in short, a creator and a fervent defender of boundaries around who was deserving of the care she offered.

More critically, the book suggests a significant collapse in diagnostic language surrounding physical disabilities. From 1906 through the middle of 1915, each child was identified with particular disabilities or ailments. She began most entries with a note on whether the child was bright or dull mentally and then states their physical impairment. Early entries are more diverse in the names used for conditions, and more specific— "Pott's Disease", "curvature of the spine", "knocked knee," "congenital dislocation of hip," "TB hip," etcetera. The word "crippled" does not appear until a 1915 entry—seven years after the book's records begin. Almost every one of the thirteen remaining entries uses the general descriptor "crippled" instead of the specifics of earlier entries. Perhaps this indicates a sudden disinterest in recording more information. However, it is equally likely that medical terminology simply mattered less to her as she began moving toward emphasizing the power of natural cures for crippling and found the children more similar than different in the medical, personal, and political ways that mattered to her.

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[163] Record Book, n.d., Box 1, Folder 6.

This shift brought her both towards and in conflict with a larger group of ideas about and advocates for alternative medicines. Browne's priorities had much in common with what some scholars call "counterhegemonic medicine."[164] Like many alternative healing methods near the turn of the century, she criticized a top-down application of medical knowledge that could not react to lived experience. She believed in the importance of care and time invested in a patient.[165] As time went on, she became more straightforward about advocating a "Nature Cure" for a diverse variety of scenarios.[166] Like her original goals, her growing belief in the power of nature to cure crippling grew out of her experience—both her own childhood and her maternal observations of the children in her home.

1918 and Beyond

Initially, Mrs. Henry Ford wrote in 1918, she thought that perhaps Blanche had been hasty in her resignation from the Van Leuven Browne Hospital-School. "But after reading your letters I cannot but believe you were not shown justice."[167]

US entry into the Great War brought changes in cultural considerations of bodies in general and orthopedists in particular. As Beth Linker has described, orthopedic techniques pioneered in medically disputed work with children formed the basis of a more respectable medical practice after it was applied to work with disabled soldiers.[168] It is likely that with the great surge in popularity orthopedists enjoyed due to their success with the war-wounded and the centrality of their methods in treating and rehabilitating such men, the hospital-school's board

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[164] James C Whorton, *Nature Cures: The History of Alternative Medicine in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 23.

[165] For links to alternative medicine, see Whorton, *Nature Cures,* 10-11, 16.

[166] Browne, "The Skimmings of the Cauldron," 166. See Henry Lindlahr, "Nature Cure," (Chicago: The Nature Cure Publishing Co., 1914), https://archive.org/details/naturecure00lindgoog.

[167] Letter from Mrs. Henry Ford to Blanche Browne, January 12, 1918, Box 1, Folder 1, Browne Papers.

[168] Linker, *War's Waste*, 37.

and the Detroit community found it progressively less appealing to limit their involvement with these specialists.[169] At the same time, the medical exams which accompanied military mobilization sparked widespread worries over the fitness (or lack thereof) of the American population, a problem often rooted in childhood medical neglect. Almost thirty percent of those drafted had "defects" that prevented their admittance to the armed forces.[170] Orthopedics held the potential answers to both the problem of the returning soldier and that of the lack of human material suitable to send to war.

It became evident to Browne in 1918 that the new board of the hospital-school was not going to follow her wishes—the popularity and influence of orthopedics was simply too strong. The control they had promised Browne was illusory; she received salary increases even as her actual ability to impact policy waned. The final straw came with one significant medical change to the educational colony plan: they intended to introduce orthopedic surgery into the institution. Browne struggled with this news for six months. Finally, effective August 1, 1918, she resigned. After the summer camp at Port Huron had ended for the year, Blanche Browne and her nine adopted children, two foster children, and her father left for a new and uncertain future on the East Coast. As she told a reporter: "I am resigning because I cannot stay and see practiced vivisective surgery in which I do not believe… I do not think the knife is a cure for cripples…I believe the greatest cure is the air, the water and sunshine. I cure by congenial surroundings, plenty of healthy exercise, good food and happiness."[171] In the split, she gave up not only the

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[169] See Linker, *War's Waste*; Byrom, "A Vision of Self Support," 45-46.
[170] Meckel, *Classrooms and Clinics*, 158.
[171] "Friend of Cripples Will Take up Greater Work in New School Along Hudson," circa 1918, in Scrapbook, Box 1, Folder 9, Browne Papers, 38.

institution but also the Van Leuven Browne Magazine (soon transformed into the Hospital-School Journal), the building that housed the hospital-school, and the city she loved.[172]

Browne had spent ten years developing her ideas and putting her intuitions into practice. With little to lose, she was now ready to make more emphatic assertions about what she believed. She delivered a speech at the Roycroft institution in East Aurora, NY, the content of which was an early form of her pamphlet "On the Vivi-Section of Crippled Children."[173] This title was an inflammatory choice of language, designed both to tie her concerns to a larger movement popular among middle-class reformers and to characterize surgery for most orthopedic conditions as not just unnecessary or harmful but also experimental. While guardians might have been willing to subject children to an unpleasant and potentially ineffective treatment if there was some known hope of recovery, Browne banked on support arising from readers' resistance to children serving as laboratory animals for some doctor's whims.

Browne's concerns and characterizations of these doctors' actions and motives were not unfounded. Many of her critiques were in line with those of a burgeoning anti-vivisectionist movement in the early 20th century United States, which variously opposed animal and human experimentation. Her charges were in particular danger; it was not uncommon for parents to give up on a child with a disability, convinced that they would never be cured enough to live a useful life or perhaps that they would die within a short time. Hence, it was easy for these doctors to gain the consent of desperate parents or distant state authorities to try something that promised a chance at recovery, even if risky. Moreover, the consent of parents was frequently considered unnecessary in experimentation on institutionalized children, as historian Susan Lederer notes:

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[172] Untitled personal narrative, Plans and Notes Before 1918, 105.
[173]Friend of Cripples Will Take up Greater Work in New School Along Hudson," circa 1918, in Scrapbook, Box 1, Folder 9, Browne Papers, 38; Untitled narrative, Box 1, Folder 2, 6, Browne Papers.

"Pediatricians were more likely to thank the medical directors of orphanages, who 'graciously furnished the material' for study than to acknowledge that they obtained permission from parents."[174] Such permission had never been forthcoming from Browne, and she hoped that her pamphlet would convince others to resist as well.

Although "On the Vivi-Section of Crippled Children" did not touch upon every idea she developed, it is in some ways her ideological masterwork, drawing upon the strategies she has used to develop her influence for the past ten years. First, she relied upon her positioning as an expert in disablement, noting her qualifications not as a doctor but as a "cripple for thirty-three years," as the Founder and former Superintendent of a hospital-school, as a woman who has cared for disabled children directly, and as a "mother, by adoption, of ten handicapped children, all but two of whom are cripples."[175] This last served as a tool to engage the reader, finding commonality with many readers or listeners. Her expertise came from her bodily difference from her abled audience; her call for sympathy stemmed from a common identity as a parent as well as a gendered role as a mother, with all of the concern, love, and lived experience that role represented.

As she had before in her persuasive writing, Browne returned to her childhood, reevaluating it in the face of all she has learned since and finding it, this time, proof of the folly of medical approaches to crippling. She revisited the memory of scribbling writing in imitation of her mother that she had written about in 1913. Whereas then she had explained this as an indication of her lifelong will to write, she now put it forth as evidence that her mother's massage treatments had allowed her right arm to recover effectively.[176] More critically, her

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[174] Susan E Lederer, *Subjected to Science: Human Experimentation in America before the Second World War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 16.

[175] "On the Vivi-Section of Crippled Children."

[176] Browne, "Writing for Kindergarten Children."

earlier memories of her mother had shifted—the decision to send Blanche to doctors after her incredible progress in the hopes that they would be able to improve upon her work had become mythically tragic, "the great mistake."[177] The medical approach took its toll on her body: "The improvement in my condition after two years' treatment by Natural Methods was nothing less than miraculous, but after thirteen years of regular Orthopedic treatment I was in a terribly pitiable condition, and very badly deformed." It was only when she refused the casts and braces at 21 that she saw improvement again.[178]

Throughout the piece, the way she alternated experiences and arguments of adulthood and childhood suggests a continual re-reflection on what it was to be a crippled child, a centering of that lived experience over medical investigation. Browne wove the recent and distant past together in evaluating the harms of orthopedic surgery. She revisited her time just before starting the home, when she observed nurses and other crippled children for guidance. From this period she pulls a single detail that stuck in her memory: a little boy named Willie, who was subjected to so many operations that the nurses criticized the doctor openly, and the boy showed a "look of deadly fear whenever anyone spoke of his doctor."[179] The text then jumps to a much later incident, when a doctor pushily requested any children Browne had with a particular disorder so that a famous visiting doctor would have human material upon which to show his technique, and persisted even though the children were too old for the operation he had in mind. This structure continues throughout the piece, as she balances stories of orthopedists attempting to subject her charges to risky procedures with the "agonized moans" of a boy from her childhood, treated for abscesses related to the therapy for his bone tuberculosis every morning for an hour. She

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[177] "On the Vivi-Section of Crippled Children."
[178] "On the Vivi-Section of Crippled Children."
[179] "On the Vivi-Section of Crippled Children."

remembered wondering why they would not just let him die and end his suffering. These alternating experiences suggest the continuity of past and present experiences of being a crippled child as well as Browne's hard-won expertise in the field, an earned appreciation of truths about bodies and medicine that could only be voiced by one who had experienced both this past and this present.

The next year would be the hardest of Browne's life. Leaving Michigan proved to be more difficult than she had imagined. One Mrs. Frank, an audience member at her antivivisection speech, had promised her and her family a living situation; this residence never materialized for unknown reasons.[180] She and her family moved around the New York/New Jersey area, seeking stability and depending on gifts from Detroit supporters and local generosity.[181] One of her children was suffering from life-threatening abscesses which would not heal, forcing her and her other children to care for him; they struggled for money so much that Browne worried that she might have to split the family, sending the children into local care, her father back to Detroit, and going alone to work in the poor districts of New York City.[182] Quickly she had moved from an institutional authority to a potential aid seeker.

Browne reflected on these difficulties in her journals. She referenced her inspiration for beginning a new writing practice at this phase in an entry from February of 1918: "Every day I must write notes—some observation or knowledge gained from my own experience."[183] Once again, Browne looked to her own experience as the author of her expertise and set out to make sure that she would receive and store any insights it brought to her. Her morale was often low in

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[180] "Friend of Cripples Will Take up Greater Work in New School Along Hudson," circa 1918, in Scrapbook, Box 1, Folder 9, Browne Papers, 38.
[181] Letters from Blanche Van Leuven Browne to Jo Labadie, 1918-1919, Labadie Papers.
[182] Blanche Van Leuven Browne to Jo Labadie, November 27, 1918, Labadie Papers.
[183] Want Book, February 27, 1918, Box 2, Folder 8, 98, Browne Papers.

these reflections; she spent pages lamenting the prolonged illness of one of her children, the humiliations of having to request aid from others, and the importance of the other children's labor to their survival. Through it all, she remained devoted to "the Work" that still needed to be done—in one entry, a long personal entry is punctuated by a drawing of an idea she had for a walking wheelchair design.[184] One gets the impression that the main reason for her desperation is not so much that it is difficult for their family to survive but that she must focus on survival rather than on pushing forward the cause of the crippled child. She also used the journals to record lists of people from whom she had sought aid, including many Detroit names; the trustees of the institution she had left behind quelched some of this support by falsely claiming that they financially supported Browne and her children.[185]

As she had in Detroit, she soon began charming the press in her new cities of residence. A New Jersey paper reported in April of 1919 on her "story of unusual bravery and cheerfulness" after one of her adult children fell down a flight of stairs. This accident drew the paper's attention, and in addition to reporting on the incident that drew their notice, they described Browne's childhood illness, her study and adoption of crippled children, her self-support as a writer, and her search not for charity but for a place to live with her large family.[186] September of that year found her and her family in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where she continued writing and living with various members of her changing family for the next decade.[187]

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[184] Blanche Van Leuven Browne, Ridgefield Notes, No. 1. November 5, 1918, Box 1, Folder 4, Browne Papers.

[185] Want Book, April 20, 1918, 68*;* Letter from Blanche Van Leuven Browne to Jo Labadie, November 27, 1918, Labadie Papers.

[186] "Cripple Adopts Children Who Are Afflicted." Unknown paper, partial title *Observer*, April 10, 1919, Box 1, Folder 5, Browne Papers.

[187] "Haunted By Fear of Separation From Her Adopted Cripples, Miss Blanche Browne Brings Seven Little Ones to Lancaster." *Lancaster Examiner,* September 30, 1919.

Conclusion

Despite Browne's absence from Detroit and the erasure of her name from the institution and the magazine, some recognized her critical contributions up into the 1920s. Esther Martin, secretary-treasurer of the Michigan Crippled Children Commission, wrote to Browne in 1928 to update her on the organization's work. She notes that she had long wished to write, claims that Browne is remembered for her critical work in establishing the groundwork for current organized efforts, and updates her on the current state of the work in the area, including a new state bill providing for the care and education of crippled children.[188] Martin seems to be writing to Browne out of a dual sense of acknowledgment and curiosity—she knows of Browne's influence and wonders what she is currently doing.

Browne's response to the letter is effusive—one can tell she is thrilled to be remembered by this new era of the local movement. She took ownership of its successes, saying,

> The BILL has made me supremely happy and proud of my Native State. I am amazed to think how exactly the seed I planted in the heart of Michigan in 1907 has been reproduced into the FLOWER of THOUGHT that is shown in THIS BILL, for do you know that my most radical ideas and the ones that were most opposed and the ones for which I struggled the hardest are NOW the MAIN POINTS in THIS BILL and are so self-evident that no explanation seems necessary in the more advanced THOUGHT of TODAY.[189]

She also praised the specific ways they had incorporated her ideas into legislation, especially the provision for continued upkeep within the "follow-up provision," designed to ensure that clients remained supported even after leaving a hospital-school or completing training. In short, despite the removal of her body from the center of the discussion, the critical insights she had

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[188] Letter from Esther Martin to Blanche Van Leuven Browne, March 28, 1928, Box 1, Folder 1, Browne Papers.

[189] Letter from Blanche Van Leuven Browne to Esther Martin, April 5, 1928.

contributed to the formation of the home had continued to influence how the crippled child was theorized, educated, and rallied around.

She also offers her advice on maintaining the strict boundaries around the category of the crippled child, though it does not seem that Martin particularly requested it. The cause and care of feebleminded children, Browne argued, needed to be kept separate from that of crippled children, as they were uneducable and, therefore, useless to promoting the need for education. She also brings in another group which she previously had not talked much about: eugenically "tainted" cases who should not be made central in the advertising for the cause. Anyone from any class or breeding can have an accident, she insists, or contract a fever leading to disablement—these children should serve as the movement's positive examples in the press. Clearly, between 1918 and 1928, the eugenic concerns around this project had heightened in the public sphere. This attention to eugenics on her part is in line with scholars' observation that declines of eugenic thought in scholarly circles during the late 1920s and early 1930s belie its continuing relevance in popular culture.[190]

Browne died in 1930 after several years of illness.[191] She was fondly remembered by many in her new life, both loved for her indomitable spirit and respected for the changes she had wrought in public and political opinion about the care of crippled children. Lancaster papers published glowing treatments of her before and after her death in 1930.[192] The local press remembered her as not only a charitable, sympathetic, and morally sound woman but also a successful advocate for the rights of crippled children. Three years after her death, the Lancaster Sunday News credited her labors as the reason for forthcoming state aid for people with

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[190] Currell and Cogdell, *Popular Eugenics,* 2-3.

[191] Letter from Ethelyn Van Leuven Browne to W.E. Blodgett, May 5, 1954, Box 1, Folder 1, Browne Papers.

[192] For example, "Haunted By Fear of Separation from Her Adopted Cripples, Miss Blanche Browne Brings Seven Little Ones to Lancaster," *Lancaster Examiner*, September 30, 1919, in Box 1, Folder 5, Browne Papers.

disabilities in both Michigan and Pennsylvania. The author breathlessly detailed how Browne had started the successful Michigan Hospital School and developed it into a formidable charity, and how she had elected to leave Detroit and seek "an accidental refuge" in Lancaster. [193]

The Sunday News reporter felt the need to edit one detail of her work, however: her anti-surgical stance on crippled child care. The article admitted that promoting the interests of crippled children by protecting them from unnecessary and ineffective surgeries played a pivotal role in her choice to leave Michigan. The author made it clear, however, that Browne was objecting not to the sophisticated healing techniques offered by surgeons in 1933, but to the primitive practices of decades prior and to the use of "stray waifs" in these experimental surgeries. [194] Her concern, according to the author, was for those who could not be helped by medical techniques—not a serious challenge to surgical interventions. This conclusion was a blatant misrepresentation of her motives and priorities.

While the Lancaster press devoted column lengths to Browne's memory, the crippled children's movement that sprung from her ideas hardly bothered to memorialize her at all. Her absence from their periodicals is almost shocking considering how often they retold origin stories of the International Society for Crippled Children. It is clear that although they found her institutions and core ideas suitable to use for their purposes, they found her ultimate challenge to medical and philanthropic dominance incompatible with the project they were pursuing. The movement that followed after her was shaped by her ideas about who the crippled child was, the importance of education and personal connection in pursuing crippled children's work, and the importance of fostering the writing and speaking of current, former, and future children with

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[193] "'Equal Chance' for Cripples Nears Goal," *Sunday News*, Lancaster, PA., November 12, 1933. Box 1, Folder 5, Browne Papers.

[194] "'Equal Chance' for Cripples Nears Goal."

disabilities. Her challenge to what she termed “the Medical Trust,” however, would not be matched again within the movement.[195]

The later crippled children’s movement would build on the structures Browne had erected—the hospital-school she had started, the magazine she had edited, the popular interest she had aroused, the treatments she had promoted. But they would also keep another aspect of her influence—the ideas she had authored about the difference between a crippled child and a sick child, or a feebleminded child; about the need children with disabilities had for care and education beyond a brief hospital stay or a quick surgery; and about the importance of cultivating the voices of children with disabilities so that they could advocate for themselves and the movement.

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[195] Browne, “The Skimmings of the Cauldron,” 165.

CHAPTER 2: "A CRIPPLE MYSELF" [196]: DISABLED WRITERS AND THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

Joe F. Sullivan took the stage at the 1924 annual meeting of the International Society for Crippled Children. He sat before a mostly nondisabled audience—philanthropists from Ohio and Michigan, a few doctors and orthopedists—and spoke from his experience as a teacher of children with orthopedic disabilities, as a writer and editor, and as a wheelchair user and polio survivor. With a characteristic flourish, he declared his own expertise: "All that has been said so far at this meeting has been interesting to you Rotarians and co-workers—interesting because you are sure that you are serving humanity. But to me it has been more than interesting— it has been actual life."[197]

Between 1918 and the mid-1930s disabled activists used their own experiences to guide the burgeoning crippled children's movement toward social and political changes for disabled people, and they were particularly well positioned to do so because of Sullivan's influence within the movement. Scholars have tended to characterize the ISCC as controlled by nondisabled philanthropists, in part likely because of the firmly philanthropic orientation of related organizations in the present day.[198] Assuredly, the movement drew substantial support from nondisabled people with no personal connection to crippled childhood, and the celebrated leaders of the movement—particularly in the mainstream press—tended to be businessmen with money and time to burn and no disabilities. Likewise, the origin stories the movement told about itself often emphasized nondisabled philanthropists—beginning either with the pathos of "Daddy" Allen's lost son or the grassroots efforts of impassioned Toledo Rotarians. Nevertheless, the periodicals of the movement until the mid-1930s also continually highlighted

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[196] Arthur Westerhelweg, "A Real Compliment," *Hospital School Journal*, December 1919-January 1920, 8.
[197] Joe F. Sullivan, "The Value of Education to the Crippled Child," *The Crippled Child*, March 1924, 3.
[198] Groce, "Disability and the League of Nations," 506-07; Byrom, "A Pupil and a Patient."

the opinions and support of people who had themselves once been “crippled children,” and their own “origin stories”—that is, their disabled childhoods—guided the movement’s ambitions. These disabled activists and writers created the intellectual heart of the movement, pushing for social change and self-definition.

During this period, a group of nondisabled businessmen inspired by Blanche Van Leuven Browne and philanthropic trends of the era gave rise to an organized movement, loosely led by their International Society for Crippled Children (ISCC). When Browne left Detroit, Sullivan was already in the process of becoming the face of the hospital-school she started, serving as “Educational Director (and spokesperson).”[199] Over the next several years, Sullivan also became the editor of the core information conduits of a burgeoning movement: the movement’s two key periodicals, *The Crippled Child* and the *Hospital-School Journal* (formerly *The Van Leuven Browne Magazine*). Sullivan’s tenure as editor of these periodicals represented a period of rhetorical power within the movement for the voices of people with disabilities, both through his writing and his editorial policies. Disabled women made particularly critical contributions to this work, authoring pieces about their and others’ disability experiences that pushed the movement toward social change.

At the same time, these core journals also housed an uneasy alliance between medical, philanthropic, and activist goals and impressions of disability. Three main groups read and contributed to the journals: disabled authors, activists, and other former “crippled children;” medical and professional interests, including social workers, surgeons, and state welfare workers; and nondisabled philanthropists, mostly members of local Rotary clubs. Disabled readers saw how other people with orthopedic impairments worked and lived, and gained ideas for their own

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[199] Byrom, “A Vision of Self-Support,” 91.

success. The industry professional, whether in medicine or social work, read the latest debates, lines of thinking, and accomplishments related to disabled children. Philanthropists kept up with the efforts of other charitable groups, congratulated one another for their generosity, and cultivated pity for the children they hoped to help. Each of these allies hoped this material would reach a fourth group—the uninvolved reader. The magazine and its supporters hoped to win laypeople to the cause of charity and welfare or educate them about the medical conditions associated with crippled children. Most of all, in the minds of Sullivan and other disabled activists, the magazines could change readers' minds about people with disabilities.

To uncover the depth of disabled activists' involvement in the movement, I have looked extensively at a source base others have used more selectively—the two major magazines of the crippled children's movement, the *Hospital School Journal* (formerly the *Van Leuven Browne Magazine*) and *The Crippled Child*. This resource base has only been used minimally by other historians. Groce mentions in a brief footnote that *The Crippled Child* was progressive for its time but does not draw much from it for her analysis of the organization.[200] Byrom uses issues of the *Hospital School Journal* and *The Crippled Child* from the 1920s to explore Joe Sullivan's ideas, depict the Michigan Hospital School, and place crippled children's work into a larger rehabilitation movement. A fuller investigation of these periodicals reveals alternative readings of the crippled children's movement to those arrived at by these authors. As chapter 1 suggests, the early issues of the Michigan periodical show the lengthy and challenging history of the movement, placing its innovations somewhat earlier than does Byrom.

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[200] Nora Groce, *From Charity to Disability Rights,* 102.

Close reading of this source base reveals that the crippled children's movement was in fact a true social movement, showcasing the active participation of people with disabilities in its work and helping scholars better understand both disability history and the complexity of social movement work more broadly. Groce seems dubious about the movement's status as a movement, claiming that people with disabilities themselves had limited involvement in crippled children's work and noting that other mainstream disability organizations, like those for blind or D/deaf people, did not join in their work.[201] I contend that a close reading of *The Crippled Child* belies the first assertion and explains the second. Disabled activists and writers are present throughout the magazine as both subjects of reportage and authors of material. The lack of cross-disability alliance could be pinned to the recurrent argument, expressed by Sullivan and others throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, that blind and deaf children already had access to state care. This assertion that rights already existed for those children and just needed to be expanded to crippled children make it logical that organizations for those children (surely not content to agree that they had achieved optimal levels of social acceptance and state aid) would not become intimately involved with the work. The incorporation of disabled viewpoints calling for radical changes to the ways in which people at all levels, from strangers on the street to potential employers to state and federal government, thought about and responded to people with disabilities make the crippled children's movement an authentic movement, even if, like many other movements, there were flaws within its approach and limitations to its inclusion and reach.

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[201] Groce, "Disability and the League of Nations," 506-507. The distinction between "Deafness" and "deafness" deals with the difference between cultural Deafness (including sign language use and community identification) and deafness as a condition of auditory impairment. Susan Burch and Alison Kafer, eds., *Deaf and Disability Studies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2010), xxi.

Origin Stories

This chapter is an examination of a movement and of the role of disabled voices within that movement more than it is the history of the International Society. As such, I do not spend a great deal of time elaborating on the founding, the bylaws, or the long trajectory of its actions. Instead, my focus is on the conduits for communication fostered by the International Society which drew in disabled writers and readers. These thinkers were infrequently deeply involved in International Society governance, but they participated in shaping the language and actions of the movement through their contributions to the magazines which connected the national—even international—enterprise. To place these voices into proper context, it is useful to spend a moment on how this powerful platform came to be.

There are multiple stages to the origin story of the International Society for Crippled Children. One beginning holds that the group was born out of the tragedy of a child's death. Edgar Allen, a businessman from Elyria, was so distraught when his son died that he opened a hospital, which in turn sparked his interest in the plight of the crippled child.[202] In his history of American charities, journalist Carl Bakal notes that many philanthropic organizations came to be because of people directly affected by the issues they set out to address.[203] Oddly enough, he follows this with the example of Edgar Allen, whose connection is emotional but tenuous—it is several leaps from the death of a child in an accident to the establishment of a hospital to an interest in children with orthopedic disabilities specifically. This example is evocative of what Emer Lucey has observed about the ways parents' experiences of disability (in her research, in recent discussions of autistic children and those with developmental disabilities) have become

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[202] As told in Albert Sidney Gregg, "The Crippled-Children's Movement and the Personal Touch," *The Rotarian*, October 1922, 180-182, 221-222.

[203] Bakal, *Charity U.S.A*, 146.

the gold standard for knowledge about autism rather than children.[204] Allen's experience is removed by a step further—the parent of a child who *might* have been disabled had he lived. It is representative of the rhetoric of the more philanthropic elements of the movement, a "there but for the grace of God go I" attitude designed to draw support from other people of similar class, racial, and religious background to these White middle-class business-owning (mostly) Protestants. This imagined and emotional connection underscored their interest in both sentimentalizing rhetoric about why to help children with disabilities and in incorporating disabled experience into movement rhetoric and goals.

The "Daddy" Allen narrative is only one favored origin story of the International Society. It may never have ballooned into a movement if it were not for a group of businessmen slightly to the northwest, the Rotary Club of Toledo. In 1917, the Toledo Rotary came upon Bunker, a local "stump of a lad" whom they perceived to require rescue.[205] They sent him to a hospital-school in a neighboring state, where he received surgeries and prosthetics as well as an education. When he returned looking "like any other young man," and later took a job at the Port Huron School for Cripples, the Toledo Rotary took full credit for his successes.[206] The men of the Ohio Rotary were not content to accept the change in their pupil-patient, nor to throw their support behind the school that had changed Bunker's body. They had larger dreams: to make care and education accessible and guaranteed to all children with disabilities in the state—then the nation—then the world.

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[204] Emer Lucey, "Feelings as Important as Facts: Parents, Guidebooks, and the Construction of Childhood Disability," Paper presented at the American Association for the History of Medicine Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH, April 26, 2019.

[205] Barbara L. Floyd, ed., *From Institutions to Independence: A History of People with Disabilities in Northwest Ohio* (Toledo, Ohio: University of Toledo Press, 2010), 47.

[206] Albert Sidney Gregg, "The Crippled-Children's Movement and the Personal Touch," *The Rotarian*, October 1922, 182; Edgar Allen, "What Port Huron Rotary Is Doing," *Hospital School Journal*, January-February 1923, 14.

There are a few sticky details of this savior story as well. First, although the Rotarians can take credit for changing his mode of transport, the ingenious Bunker had already come up with a way to move about his immediate vicinity: a board mounted on a roller skate.[207] Bunker's employment was apparently short-lived; Bunker wrote Rotary president Gustavus Ohlinger in 1930 to request his help in securing a job.[208] Most significantly, the club's influence was less instrumental in caring for Bunker than merely connecting him with care. Surely the already-extant school can be given some measure of credit for knowing the significance of caring for and educating the crippled child, as he had been "placed under the loving and tender care of Mother Blanche and the enervating influences and atmosphere of the Hospital-School."[209]

Alva's notice by Rotarians may have been somewhat novel, but his situation at the VLBHS was not unique. His arrival was one of many from the region. Looking through the extant record books from the Van Leuven Browne Home from 1906-1915, a curious theme emerges. Most of the children admitted hailed from Detroit and surrounding Michigan regions. However, a steady trickle of children—far more than any city other than Detroit-- arrived at Browne's doorstep from Toledo, Ohio.[210] Alva Bunker was one such child. As historian Barbara Floyd has noted, Bunker's story sparked the interest of Ohio philanthropists to begin a national effort to aid the crippled child.[211]

Over the next few years, the Rotary and the International Society separated into two distinct but intimately connected entities. Many discussions of this movement treat the actions of Rotarians in work for crippled children as a Rotary project, consigning the whole business to

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[207] Floyd, *From Institutions to Independence,* 47. For more examples of disabled ingenuity, see Williamson, *Accessible America*.
[208] Floyd, *From Institutions to Independence,* 51-52.
[209] Day Book, undated, Box 1, Folder 9, 32, Browne Papers.
[210] Record Book, undated, Box 1, Folder 6, Browne Papers.
[211] Floyd, "The Boy Who Changed the World."

philanthropy.[212] To minimize the intentional separation between Rotary and the International Society is to misrepresent the role of disabled people in the movement as unimportant, or rhetorical pawns, or even nonexistent. It becomes difficult to see the social and political claims that disabled writers voiced, which helped guide the movement's definitions, its policies, and its goals. Crippled children's work became a topic of conversation in Rotary circles for years, as some club members worried about the organization being transformed entirely into a philanthropy for disabled children. In a talk before a group of Rotarians in 1924, Kelsey addressed the growing conflict within the Rotary over the organization's purpose, making clear that he had no wish for Rotary to become such a specific organization. However, he held that Rotarians played a critical role in the movement, and they should take pride in this fact.[213] This conflict led to the creation of the Ohio Society for Crippled Children, then the International Society.

Magazines: History and Purpose

The two major periodicals of the crippled children's movement both received national distribution (albeit in limited circles) but had strong regional ties. The *Hospital School Journal*, once the *Van Leuven Browne Magazine,* was ostensibly a humble institutional newsletter, fully taken over by Joe Sullivan after Browne's departure in 1918. *The Crippled Child* was the official organ of the International Society for Crippled Children, initially edited by James M. Bateman when it launched in 1923 and modeled similarly to both iterations of the *Hospital School Journal*. Both *The Crippled Child* and the *Hospital-School Journal* published original work by a variety of contributors, as well as frequently reprinting pieces from other magazines that had

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[212] Groce, "Disability and the League of Nations"; Byrom, "A Pupil and a Patient."

[213] Ed Kelsey, "What Rotarians Can Do and What It Means to Them," *The Crippled Child,* July-August 1924, 4.

some thematic connection to the missions of the movement, and both claimed to have a broader range of distribution than their narrow purposes might suggest.

Much of the information about these magazines' circulation comes from the editors themselves, and in such vague phrasings as to be hard to evaluate. At one point, the *Journal* boasted that it was received and read by every Superintendent of Public Instruction in the nation as well as one hundred national publications.[214] We can guess at the breadth of locations these works reached through the reader letters and reports printed in its pages. A *Journal* editorial in 1919 claimed that in addition to the obvious function of donations—to support the work—the gifts they received from out of state helped them to appreciate the reach of their magazine and its ideas—even to "persons who would never know of the existence of the Michigan Hospital School nor ever think of the peculiar needs of crippled children were it not for this monthly publication."[215] He gave as examples a Kansas City man who picked up a copy in Detroit and "when he reached home he mailed a nice check" and readers in Ohio and Kentucky who raised money among friends for the benefit of the hospital school.[216]

When the International Society first began publishing its magazine, *The Crippled Child*, it framed its work similarly to the old charity organization societies, albeit more specialized. The ISCC, claimed Allen, did not intend to open new institutions, but to support the growth of existing ones and link people to those closest and most helpful to them. Intriguingly, however, he mentioned two other goals, not so easily categorized. One was to "educate the people to the possibilities that exist for the crippled child," and the other was to "see to it that somebody cares, and also see to it that the human touch, that part which we have so neglected in the past, be given

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[214] "A Word to Our Readers," *Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, August 1916, 25.
[215] Sullivan, "Editorial," *Hospital School Journal*, May-June 1919, 3.
[216] Sullivan, "Editorial," *Hospital School Journal*, May-June 1919, 3.

to the child in its home, which will bring about confidence and hope."[217] These goals were more in line with emphases on personal connections, support, and changing the minds of society that disabled activists emphasized. They were also two goals that could potentially be well served by a magazine.

After less than two years of issues, Sullivan took over the editorship of the *Crippled Child* in 1924.[218] This change meant that one disabled man and former crippled child, who served as an educator in day-to-day contact with the children the movement hoped to benefit, now controlled the two core voices of the movement. The May-June 1924 issue was the first of Sullivan's editorship. He was managing editor, with Vivian M. Hackett listed as editor. The magazine's look also changed. Images of a boy and a girl flanked the masthead, each using crutches and looking well-dressed, easily gendered, and happy; the issues overall contained more pictures of children, rather than the formal portraits of philanthropists that earlier issues embraced. In Sullivan's first issue, a report on a recent meeting of the Directors and Advisory Council of the International Society revealed that those in attendance had overwhelmingly agreed that the Society should focus on developing the organizations and resources they currently had, rather than expanding into more states (although they did not discourage interested parties from launching local societies in new states if they chose). Two of the three key ways to accomplish this involved the Society becoming a "real clearing house for information" and increasing publicity for the Society and the cause through the magazine.[219] Later in the issue, Sullivan linked their reasons for publishing the magazine to the use of the press in other notable

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[217] Edgar Allen, "President Allen's Report 1924 Annual Meeting" *The Crippled Child,* October 1923, 3.
[218] In both the *Hospital School Journal* and *The Crippled Child*, some pieces are attributed to an author, where others are not. Context makes clear that many of these unattributed pieces were authored by Sullivan.
[219] "Directors and Advisory Council Meet at Toledo," *The Crippled Child*, May-June 1924, 4.

social movements, including abolition, prohibition, women's suffrage, and "all [other] great movements for the betterment of humanity."[220]

Sullivan was making waves before becoming a teacher at Browne's hospital-school and editor of the movement's major periodicals. His crippled childhood began in rural Arkansas, where he contracted polio at age 4, losing the use of both legs and one arm. He had few resources to draw on-- his parents were working class, his hometown small.[221] He was determined to access education but forced to find unconventional ways to get there-- first, in a wagon driven by his older brothers, then, when that became untenable, with a cart and a team of goats that he bought with money he earned selling newspapers. Ultimately, he graduated high school with honors and shortly became editor of the local paper in Imboden.[222] Sullivan went from selling news to making news in 1912, when he ran for mayor of his small town of Imboden, Arkansas. He won handily with the help of his campaign staff, a "bevy of enthusiastic girls" who reportedly "forced their fathers and brothers and sweethearts to vote for him whether they wanted to or not."[223] In 1914, he released *The Unheard Cry*, a book detailing his philosophy about crippling and rehabilitation. Both the publication of this book and the mayoral victory brought him into Browne's line of sight.

Sullivan brought his interests with him into the editorship of both magazines, blending his experiential, activist takes on the problem with the philanthropic, social welfare, and medical concerns of the movement's financial backers. Each issue commingled philanthropic, medical, and activist takes on disability—sometimes all on the same page. The irony of placement can be

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[220] "Directors and Advisory Council Meet at Toledo," *The Crippled Child*, May-June 1924, 4.
[221] Byrom, "Joseph F. Sullivan and the Discourse of 'Crippledom,'" 157.
[222] Brad Byrom, "Progressive Movement," 51.
[223] "Thanks to Bevy of Enthusiastic Girls, Arkansas Wins Distinction of Being the 'Youngest Mayor," *Nashville Tennesean and the Nashville American*, June 15, 1912, 8.

profound. The words of disabled activists sit alongside the eugenic musings of social welfare experts. Page 4 of the September-October 1924 issue of *The Crippled Child* juxtaposes two women with starkly contrasting interpretations of the social problem of the crippled child. A contribution from Edith Reeves Solenberger, author of the Russell Sage report referenced in chapter one, takes the top of the page. In the piece, titled "Why Have Cripples?" she argues that helping people with disabilities is commendable, but society should be thinking instead of eliminating them through eugenic, medical, and social means. Unlike other Progressive targets—feeblemindedness, war, disease, poverty—she claimed the problem of children with disabilities was highly solvable. One simply had to pursue the appropriate goals of social reform—greater emphasis on preventing automobile accidents, for one, which she points out killed many children as well as crippled them. She also championed prompt surgical attention, which could make many congenital and accident cases able-bodied or more able-bodied. Most of all, investment in medical and scientific efforts to end crippling diseases, which made up a majority of crippled child cases, could have a powerful effect on the number of impairments. Infantile paralysis seemed to strike indiscriminate of race, class, or cleanliness, and would likely need to be battled in the laboratory; rickets and bone tuberculosis seemed to predominantly affect "under-nourished, poorly-housed children, most often those of the poorer and less intelligent families."[224] With preventive work, the society could work itself out of a job just as well—perhaps even more so—than if they got the state to take over providing aid. If there were no crippling, there would be no crippled children for either the state or private philanthropy to rescue.

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[224] Edith Reeves Solenberger, "Why Have Cripples?" *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1924, 4.

Contrast this with polio survivor Reinette Lovewell's piece "Keeping Up Their Morale," at the bottom of the same page. Lovewell was an early member of the International Society, serving as a member of the publicity committee representing women's publications.[225] Lovewell, like Blanche Van Leuven Browne, used her platform to argue that some of the most crucial work of the crippled children's movement was the province of nonexperts who could support disabled children's emotional and social needs. While Reeves set out to eradicate the cripple, Lovewell implored the reader to consider their humanity. Like most of Lovewell's pieces, it came with a photo of the author, a White woman with waved hair, seated and smiling at the reader as if engaged in friendly conversation—perfectly positioned to remind the reader of the author's friendliness, femininity, and humanity. Lovewell compared disabled children with soldiers, saying that both fought difficult battles and needed to keep their spirits up to do so effectively.[226] She echoed Browne's ideas about individuality and alliance, saying that these kids needed to be appreciated both as "just the same" as other children and that they also needed individualized efforts—"a gay, extravagant hat for the little girl who must wear an ugly brace and shoe," or "an initialed baseball sweater" for a boy who used crutches to get around.[227] These individualized items would help them feel like part of a larger group based on their gender and interests. The girl needed to feel pretty and graceful; the boy needed to feel like a sportsman. A picnic or a party—common activities for groups of disabled children targeted by the movement—was a nice gesture and certainly enjoyed, but the key to keeping up the morale of children with disabilities was "individual love and compassion expressed in tactful, comprehending ways."[228] For

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[225] *The Crippled Child,* October 1923, 2.

[226] Soldiers with disabilities were similarly exhorted about the importance of morale by rehabilitationists; for example, Linker, *War's Waste.*

[227] Reinette Lovewell, "Keeping Up Their Morale," *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1924, 4.

[228] Lovewell, "Keeping Up Their Morale," 4.

Lovewell, these children were not problems; they *had* problems; they needed the support of the community to tackle feelings of inadequacy and fears of exclusion. Crucially, this work was best undertaken not by experts but by regular people. Side by side, activists and professional philanthropists put their arguments on the pages of these works, framing the issues at hand as medical or social, professional or personal.

Why the Crippled *Child*?

Like Browne, the burgeoning crippled children's movement realized the need to define their terms. In practice, this resulted in a target population that had much in common with Browne's, though with a broader national reach. The group was defined capaciously, emphasizing what they could do and achieve; their needs were education and understanding. In rhetoric, however, defining the crippled child proved a more complicated process, as disabled writers made demands about social change that went further than Browne had proposed, while health and welfare professionals held space in the magazine to emphasize the primacy of scientific and medical approaches. Moreover, despite the celebrated breadth of the category of "crippled child," the desirable results of rehabilitation as portrayed in movement literature differed for working-class children and middle-class children, children of color and White children, and male and female children.

For the disabled activists in this movement, childhood disability had unique features, and they believed in organizing around childhood for reasons beyond sentimental appeal. Childhood and adolescence were critical touchstone periods for these activists. The person disabled in adulthood had an identity outside of his disability ascribed to him by others—if injured or ill, his friends thought of him as the same person he had always been. A crippled child, these writers held, was treated differently by others for as long as she could perceive; "never has known what independence means," and assumed all of the adults who pitied and patronized her were correct because they knew more than she did. [229] Mabel Starrett remembered her transition between being able-bodied and becoming disabled all her life. Her obituary included a selection she had written for herself, describing the stages of her life. The first was a carefree childhood; the second she describes only as "the stolid wall of invalidism."[230] This sentiment is shared by other disabled writers, even those who never became involved with the movement. Both Randolph Bourne and Katherine Butler Hathaway wrote of their disabled childhoods—Hathaway prostrate in a Bradford frame for much of her youth, Bourne with hunched stature from spinal tuberculosis and a scarred face from misplaced forceps at his birth.[231]

However, childhood did not have to be such a fraught period for disabled people. Activists in this movement continually emphasized that a crippled childhood could be a happy one. Sullivan claimed that when nondisabled people encountered a happy and well-adjusted disabled child, they assumed the child was exceptional, when in fact she had merely been brought up in the sort of environment that all disabled children deserved, one where she was valued and educated.[232] Starrett saw education as an "awakening," the beginning of a new stage in her life in which she attended high school in Manito, Illinois and received a BA from Bradley College in 1925. Education and personal connections made crippled childhood compatible with joy and ease.

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[229] Sullivan, "The First Aid to Crippled Children, or What We Adults Must Learn Before We Can Really Help," *Hospital School Journal* 8, no. 6 (September-October 1920), 10.

[230] " STARRETT, Mabel Grace Agnes: 1899-1951," Iowa Genealogy Web, updated March 23, 2014, http://iagenweb.org/boards/vanburen/obituaries/index.cgi?read=492762.

[231] Katharine Butler Hathaway, *The Little Locksmith* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2000), 14-36; Randolph Bourne, "The Handicapped," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1911, Disability History Museum, https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=2009&page=all.

[232] Sullivan, "The First Aid to Crippled Children," 10.

Who Counted as a Crippled Child?

Movement members of all types found it useful to define the crippled child capaciously, both in terms of impairments and social status. Unlike other realms of medicine, disease, and social welfare efforts, this movement believed that crippling impacted children regardless of class and that the same sorts of interventions were useful for all of them. In fact, some held that conditions inherent to either wealth or poverty could create crippled children. Physiotherapeutic nurse Dorothy Kinne used both groups to illustrate the importance of early intervention to prevent what she dubbed "the perpetual cripple." One family she had attended suffered crippling due to rickets, often linked with poverty. By treating some of the children at a young age, she stopped their becoming permanently disabled; the older members of the family were not able to achieve the same progress. However, the fast-paced nature of middle-class life could also be damaging. Well-off overachievers could end up "dwarfed, stunted through excessive horseback riding and violin lessons."[233] For Kinne, schools were the solution—keeping the "normal" child normal and finding and improving the endangered children. Even the children of elite preparatory schools could be monitored and corrected in this way. Schools could not only provide access to children; the trust and authority that the educational system had already engendered would also foster trust in a population wary of doctors.

Sullivan frequently compared crippled children to groups of other disabled people for whom the state provided care and education to advocate for change. He drew attention in his early writings to how the state, due to reforms in the early and mid-19th century, had already committed to providing for the deaf, blind, and mentally ill.[234] Likewise, the First World War

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[233] Dorothy Kinne, "The Field of a Physiotherapeutic Nurse," *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1924, 14.
[234] Joe F. Sullivan, *The Unheard Cry*, Nashville: Smith & Lamar, 1914, 20, 38-39.

and the burgeoning support it brought for veteran's rehabilitation represented a meaningful but limited push for public opinion: "The public has agreed on the imperative need of re-education for the crippled soldier in order that he may resume his economic place in life—but is apparently unawakened to the parallel problem presented by the crippled child who, when left alone, in most instances, has less to depend upon than the most handicapped soldier when left alone."[235] In his mind, crippled children were more deserving and capable of success than those already provided for, who were either unable to learn or already benefited from a wealth of resources unavailable to his constituents. Sullivan was not the only disabled writer to voice these sentiments. Mabel Starrett, a frequent contributor to *The Crippled Child*, became disabled in 1911 when she was in the middle of eighth grade. Like many others, her bout with polio left her unable to return to school: "The modern schools were not for wheelchairs. There was no one to hear my pleading cry for an education. I read of Helen Kellar (sic) and of schools for the blind and the deaf, and always there came the question, 'Must the cripple be left alone in darkness with only pity as the companion of his days?'"[236] Despite claims from the movement that other groups of disabled people were better cared for than those with orthopedic impairments, there was no federal support to care for or educate disabled children before the mid-1930s.[237] It was due to the promotional, definitional work of the crippled children's movement that the first federal legislation to aid disabled children through the Social Security Act was limited to orthopedic disability before later expanding outward to include rheumatic heart complaints and hearing and vision impairments.[238]

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[235] Joe F. Sullivan, "A Plea to the Legislators of Michigan," *Hospital School Journal* 7 no. 4 (November-December 1918), 4.

[236] Mabel Starrett, "Ambition Enables Crippled Girl to Win a Bachelor of Arts Degree," *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1926, 7.

[237] Laurel Iverson Hitchcock, "The Creation of Federal Services for Crippled Children," PhD diss., (University of Alabama, 2009), 4.

[238] Hitchcock, "The Creation of Federal Services," 5.

While the movement had definite stances on particular types of inclusion—of various varieties of impairment, of children of various social classes—there were also topics that member organizations were inconsistent about, such as race. Institutions in the Great Lakes region, particularly Ohio, tended to make much of claiming that they were open to any children "regardless of color or creed," as a photo caption for the Rotary's Home for Crippled Children in Youngstown, Ohio put it.[239] This phrasing frequently appeared in bylaws and reports of new institutions in these periodicals.[240] Several images throughout the magazine's run featured African-American children and White children playing or posing alongside one another at the schools, hospitals, and homes associated with the International Society.[241] Yet there seems to have been minimal racial diversity within the homes sponsored by the movement—only Black and White children appear in the images in these publications.

The few stories of Black children and their families in movement periodicals often treated their subjects condescendingly. One piece in an early issue of *The Crippled Child* celebrated a family from Georgia, "a well-meaning colored family, doing their best to educate and care for their little children" who moved to Ohio so that their disabled daughter could be cared for at Edgar Allen's Gates Hospital.[242] They struggled to find work, however, and the daughter only made her way to Gates after a public health nurse because interested in the many health needs of the family's other members. Once admitted, the unnamed ten-year-old gained access to education for (the article claimed) the first time in her life and learned to walk with crutches and braces; when she grew closer to adulthood, the state Rehabilitation Bureau would

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[239] Untitled photo, *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1926, 11.

[240] For example, Joe F. Sullivan, When Parents Give Up, Hospitals 'Carry On," *Hospital School Journal*, September-October 1924, 8-9.

[241] For example, *The Crippled Child*, February 1924, cover; Joe F. Sullivan, When Parents Give Up, Hospitals 'Carry On," *Hospital School Journal*, September-October 1924, 8-9.

[242] "A New Freedom," *The Crippled Child*, May-June 1924, 7.

provide her with job training. The girl expressed confidence that she would soon be rid of the braces as well; the author blithely commented that "this will probably never be the case, but where all was gloom and despair, the child now has a hopeful outlook, and instead of becoming a parasite on the community, she will some day be a productive citizen."[243] This line cuts in two ways; first, the author treated the girl as an unreliable narrator of her own physical potential; then, the author shifted the significance of the girl's treatment from her satisfaction with her own life to the positive impact on society of avoiding her future dependency.

There were also plenty of schools that excluded children of color, particularly outside of the movement's Ohio epicenter, and the magazine's contributors did not directly critique this. However, they did explicitly describe who was allowed to attend. One article by Solenberger, for example, listed institutions in and around Pittsburgh in honor of the upcoming annual meeting to be held in the city. She specified in each listing that the home was for White children only, saving until the end the sole option for disabled African American children, which she noted was also "the only residential institution exclusively for colored crippled children in North America."[244] Was this a critique, placed in contrast with the earlier Pennsylvania school descriptions and the extremely common, self-satisfied proclamations of equity of schools like Youngstown's elsewhere in the publication's pages? Or was it merely a straightforward descriptor for the information of the reader? It is difficult to say for certain, but the information sits oddly juxtaposed with the celebratory reports of homes "open to any color or creed" elsewhere.

It is worth noting that although Sullivan was likely responsible for the images within the magazine and thus had some hand in selecting those that showed interracial groups of children,

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[243] "A New Freedom," 11.

[244] Edith Reeves Solenberger, "What to See in Pennsylvania," *The Crippled Child*, January-February 1926, 13.

most direct mention of African American children with disabilities comes from nondisabled writers. Disabled activists seldom mentioned these children. Perhaps this tension is partially because the disabled activists who wrote for these magazines, almost entirely White, failed to consider children of color at all in any specific way—they were concerned more with helping mini versions of themselves than they were with promoting efficiency and social participation to all members of the population. There is some scant evidence that some disabled activists were interested in incorporating children of color into the goals of care and education—the way that Browne incorporated indigenous children, for example, or the photos where there are one or two Black children included in a group of pupil-patients. However, for White disabled activists, these children ultimately were not the most important faces of the movement—their empathy was limited by considerations of race and to some extent class, limiting their ability to teach empathy and justice to nondisabled readers.

White disabled activists wanted to link crippled children with normalcy. In their minds, normalcy included intelligence, interests, gender conformity, and Whiteness. Much as citizenship required appropriately gendered behavior (as described in chapter 1), practices of racial play in crippled children's institutions suggest that racialization also served as a way for White disabled people to showcase normalcy and community. The phrasing "regardless of color or creed," may have been common, but so too was the method by which the happy children of Youngstown had earned money to pay off the Home's mortgage: "four annual minstrel shows."[245] Minstrel shows and blackface performances happened frequently, often put on by the children to entertain one another or their benefactors. Halloween costumes and parties also incorporated blackface or

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[245] Untitled photo, *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1926, 11.

"playing Indian."[246] As historians such as David Roediger and Philip Deloria have shown, these types of racialized play have historically served as a method to reify the Whiteness of the performers and the audience, minimizing differences between groups by heightening the difference of a racialized other.[247] Likewise, White disabled children of the early twentieth century could be defined as future citizens through these contrasts. Disabled children were not alone in these practices; minstrel shows and "playing Indian" occurred in summer camps, schools, and other groups of non-disabled children. Van Slyck has suggested that the faux-Indian practices of the summer camp "allowed children from different European ethnicities to assume—at least temporarily—a common racial identity; once campers removed their feather headdresses and war paint, their shared whiteness may also have seemed more evident."[248] The very commonality of practices of blackface and redface in nondisabled groups only served to make the point the movement wished to make: these children were by and large normative, capable, future citizens, doing the same activities and sharing everyday racial experiences with nondisabled children. Racial play functioned as a way to place crippled children firmly within the mainstream of normativity. However, it left in question the position of children of color within these supposedly race-blind institutions and their status within the movement as a whole.

Whom Could the Crippled Child Become?

Just as critical in defining the parameters of the crippled child was portraying whom the crippled child could become—an argument through potential. Both magazines emphasized the

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[246] See also blackface used as Halloween costume in "This is How Crippled Children Play," *Hospital-School Journal,* November-December 1920, 8-9.

[247] David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 2000), 116; Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 7.

[248] Abigail A. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890-1960* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxxvii.

lives and achievements of people with disabilities in both original stories and reprints from other publications. C. Lee Cook, for example, was a recurring figure in these periodicals, an argument for disabled intelligence and potential personified. He was a successful inventor and business owner—his company mostly made parts for trains and steamship engines, but he also designed a buggy for transporting himself—and his story served as evidence of disabled people's power to achieve.[249] These sorts of narratives could lend itself to a bootstrapping conservatism—work hard, be a self-starter, and one would be successful. For example, Cook held that cripples should not talk about their conditions; he noted that their tendency to do so was why he did not socialize with any other people with disabilities. Rather, disabled people needed to take responsibility for themselves and use the power of their minds to get ahead.[250] Nevertheless, in his writing, Cook also highlighted a collective social responsibility to give disabled children a fair chance—not just so they can be independent from the public purse, but because of "the permanent blessing" that disabled folks could contribute if supported in their education.[251]

Most significantly, Cook's story took for granted that people with disabilities, particularly those who had been children with disabilities, were experts who should be directing the goals of the movement. His self-designed wheelchair shows his belief that his knowledge of his own needs and his ability to meet them led to a superior product than any available from an orthopedic or medical expert. Moreover, Cook, like many other activists including Browne and Sullivan, opted to use his knowledge and success in service of disabled children. In an early piece on Cook, Sullivan lauded him for caring for a disabled boy of 16. He noted a popular aphorism floating around rehabilitation work at the time that "A cripple is the best teacher for a

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[249] "Our History." Cook Compression, 2019, https://www.cookcompression.com/history/.

[250]. C. Lee Cook, "What Shall We Do With Our Cripples?" *Hospital School Journal* 8, no. 3 (Dec-Jan 1920): 12.

[251] C. Lee Cook, "How the Handicapped May Win Success," *The Crippled Child* 4, no. 5 (Jan-Feb 1927): 7.

cripple" and suggested that this story showed it also extended to guardianship. "Thus Mr. Cook has taken it upon himself to furnish a teacher for this 16-year-old boy until such time as Kentucky awakes to her duty as a state and provides for him and the thousands like him."[252] Cook had been inspired by his childhood disability to help the next generation, fostering an intergenerational disabled community.

Almost all were men in these texts' tales of greatness; women were more likely to be seen pursuing achievement than having found it. However, women appeared in other sorts of stories: personal narratives, and occasionally stories about having achieved a family life. As other scholars have noted, eugenic ideologies were incredibly popular during these years, living in uneasy coexistence with the crippled children's movement. Both disabled and nondisabled writers in movement periodicals grappled with the applicability of eugenic discourses to the disabled children they sought to advance. Dr. R.G. Leland's address to a conference in Elyria argued for an appreciation of the concept of prevention—there were six life stages, three of them before birth, and the movement should do its best to promote awareness and health of the child at each stage.[253] Mabel Starrett used eugenic terminology to introduce herself and her story of childhood disablement in her first piece for *The Crippled Child*, describing herself as the child of parents who "were of the sturdy American stock whose ancestors are a conglomeration of Irish, Scotch, French, Dutch, and English."[254]

Beth Linker has highlighted how rehabilitation ideologies seemed to challenge notions of eugenic fitness, showing that the body was not genetically predestined but malleable. However,

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[252] Joe F. Sullivan, "Views and Reviews: A Challenge to Kentucky," *Hospital School Journal* 7, no.4 (November-December 1918), 9.
[253] R.G. Leland, "Education and Prevention," *The Crippled Child,* October 1923, 7.
[254] Mabel Starrett, "Ambition Enables Crippled Girl to Win a Bachelor of Arts Degree," *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1926, 7.

her subjects did not pose as much of a threat to eugenic ideals; the veteran amputees of whom she writes were disabled in adulthood, not congenitally; thus, their rehabilitation was merely the restoration of "normalcy."[255] Likewise, the rehabilitation of a childhood polio survivor only meant that the able-bodiedness that existed before interjection of an illness had returned. The malleability of the body challenged eugenic ideas about the visible, physical body being evidence of fitness, but it did not truly threaten concepts of heritability. Polio survivors made up most of the people discussed in movement literature, possibly because of their higher numbers than other categories of disablement relevant to the movement, but perhaps also because of their eugenic appeal.[256] Perhaps this is part of the reason for the movement's continued emphasis on the intellectual abilities of their disabled children; it doubly emphasized a lack of conflict between eugenic fitness and their ideas.

This middle road approach put the subject of marriage and children in a complicated place, and many of the disabled writers in the movement either remained unmarried or did not discuss their marriages publicly. People with disabilities were widely expected not to and discouraged from forming romantic relationships and families, and many people with disabilities promoted or complied with these proscriptions.[257] Teacher and writer Arthur Westerhelweg seems to have never married and continued living with his parents for the majority of his life.[258] Reinette Lovewell also appears to have been single throughout most of this period, although she

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[255] Linker, *War's Waste*, 2-4.

[256] Tuberculoses (like Pott Disease) and poliomyelitis were the most prevalent causes of disability in many institutions. For example, Reeves, *Care and Education of Crippled Children*, 19-21.

[257] Catherine Kudlick, "Modernity's Miss-Fits:: Blind Girls and Marriage in France and America, 1820–1920," in *Women on Their Own*, ed. Rudolph M. Bell and Virginia Yans, Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Being Single (Rutgers University Press, 2008), 201–18, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hj2wd.12.

[258] "United States World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:X5CP-FX9 : 8 November 2017), Arthur Edward West, 1942; citing NARA microfilm publication M1936, M1937, M1939, M1951, M1962, M1964, M1986, M2090, and M2097 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

later married and took the surname Donnelly.[259] Sullivan married while he was at the Michigan Hospital School, to a former nurse at the MHS, but aside from a short announcement in the *Hospital School Journal* little appears about this couple and their domestic life in either periodical.[260]

Mary Dickerson Donahey is one of the few disabled writers to take up the issue of marriage in these publications. A survivor of childhood sarcoma, journalist for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, and writer of nine children's books, she made her marriage and community objections to it a key part of the story she told in *The Crippled Child*. Donahey did so in a lighthearted way: after casually mentioning that she worked until her marriage, she stopped for an imagined audience interjection—"'Married!!!' I can hear somebody shriek. 'You don't mean to say anybody married you?'"[261] Donahey and her husband received an abundance of criticism from friends and family when they married, and Donahey made a point not only of declaring that they had married for love but also that "I am feminine enough to want to mention that it wasn't a case of my leaping at the first chance, either."[262] She asserts claims to success in both her writing career and her romantic and domestic lives. Donahey had done most of her own housework since she got married, though she despised it. The effort it took made her all the more pleased with her domestic achievements: "I am much prouder of the fact that I can get a good dinner than I am of those nine books!"[263] Donahey's was a story of marital triumph, articulating societal disapproval and dismissing it, replacing it with domestic success.

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[259] US Census Bureau, *Twelfth Census of the United States Census, 1920*; Census Place: Manhattan Assembly District 9, New York, New York; Roll: T625; Enumeration District: 679, 6B, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

[260] "Joe F. Sullivan Marries," *Hospital School Journal*, July-August 1920, 13. Reprint from *The Farmington Enterprise*.

[261] Mary Dickerson Donahey, "Don't Pity Us Folks Who Have Physical Defects," *Hospital-School Journal*, July-August 1919, 12.

[262] Donahey, "Don't Pity Us," 12.

[263] Donahey, "Don't Pity Us," 12.

Another story, this one a reprint, drew a more middling line between encouraging marriage for disabled readers and suggesting that medical science must have the final say. The headline tells all: “Crippled Girl, Once Doomed to Die, Becomes Bride.” The reprint from the Boston American reported how Helen Collins had been disabled from birth. With a death sentence given her by doctors and poverty at her doorstep, she took comfort in the cartoons of George McManus. She wrote to McManus expressing her appreciation and received an invitation from him and his newspaper to visit New York City for a week. While there, a woman arranged for her to meet with a doctor, who “effected a cure” for Collins. The paper printed her letter to Mrs. McManus announcing her marriage. The letter was also referred to the physician who had cured her, who “said that Helen should marry the man of her choice.”[264] It was a conflicted piece overall; while it rejected eugenic notions of heritability on one level by celebrating the marriage of a woman with a congenital disability, it also deferred to eugenic thought by reporting that the doctor had okayed the marriage and thus scientifically sanctioned it. Stories of marriage and family, couched as they sometimes were in the notion of eugenic approval, made clear that the crippled child could potentially marry one day, even if this would not be true for all of the children helped by the movement.

Perhaps the most direct look at whom the crippled child could become came from reader letters. Disabled people had responded to movement periodicals since Browne’s days of editorship over the *Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, and these sorts of letters continued to appear in the International Society’s affiliated periodicals in the late 1910s and 1920s. These letters served multiple roles: as examples of what great heights the disabled child could achieve, what

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[264] “Crippled Girl, Once Doomed to Die, Becomes Bride,” *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1924, 15.

deficits they had to grapple with if unsupported, and how they could be—and were—involved in political and educational activities designed to benefit the next generation of disabled children.

Readers commonly reflected on how they might have been helped by the medical care, educational opportunities, and activities now available to disabled children because of movement activism had these things been possible in their youth. Teacher and writer C.W. Fullwood of Nyack, New York, had read of Browne's magazine in another publication. In 1916, he wrote to the *Van Leuven Browne Magazine* to express his interest, saying, "I am a cripple; have walked on crutches for fifty years. Had there been such a movement as you advocate in my childhood or youth, doubtless now I would be independent instead of well nigh penniless as I am approaching old age."[265] He related his tale of difficulty, which had a great deal in common with other former crippled children's stories: a rural upbringing, a "natural love of study and reading," a job offer to continue as a teacher in the school he attended as a student. [266] Fullwood closed by saying that his life could have unfolded much differently had he been aided by an organization that had provided for a fuller, earlier education and vocational training, and he called upon "people of means" to facilitate this opportunity for the current generation of children.

Likewise, a 1917 issue of the *Van Leuven Browne Magazine* contained a letter from Maurice Johnson, which the editor gave the title "Songs of a Cripple." The message was preceded by an editor's note saying that although Johnson had not written the letter with the intent of having it published, the editor felt that it showed the critical nature of their work so strongly that the public needed to read it.[267] Johnson contracted infantile paralysis at the age of two and had not learned to walk before then; as a result, he had never walked. His polio left him

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[265] "A Sample of Our Letters," *Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, July 1916, Box 2, Folder 8, 27, Browne Papers.
[266] "A Sample of Our Letters," 28.
[267] Maurice Johnson, "Songs of a Cripple," *Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, January 1917, 9.

with little control over his nerves. Although his sister had taught him at home, “this training lacked discipline, and continuation, both of which are keystones in the temple of education. There is not a day in this life,” he continued, “when I do not keenly feel the need of this lost discipline.”[268] This is why Johnson felt so strongly that the promotion of education was particularly critical for children with disabilities, not only because of the information provided or the vocational experience but because of the discipline it provided to get one used to life’s expectations and challenges.

Three years later, spinal tuberculosis survivor Arthur Westerhelweg was similarly reflective, praising the *Hospital School Journal* and wishing that he could put his firsthand knowledge to use in service of the movement. The son of German immigrants living in Cincinnati, Westerhelweg first appeared in the *Hospital-School Journal* in a 1920 letter to the editor, published under the headline “A Real Compliment.” [269] Identifying as “a cripple myself,” Westerhelweg praised the magazine, comparing it favorably to other fare which targeted disabled or ill readers. The volume was "Inspiring-- cheerful and interesting. It makes the cripple feel as though someone is interested in him” -- unlike the Shut In Society's *Open Window*, which Westerhelweg claimed "brings the blues instead of smiles." [270] Westerhelweg’s letter points to how disabled readers may have received these texts—as encouraging, as a different, more activating sort of text than they received in *Shut In’s Journal* or other magazines of that ilk.

At the time of his writing, Westerhelweg seems wistful—he cannot afford to subscribe despite his wish to support the magazine and help it grow; he would like to work with children

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[268] Johnson, “Songs of a Cripple,” 9.

[269] US Census Bureau, *Twelfth Census of the United States Census, 1920*; Census Place: Cincinnati Ward 3, Hamilton, Ohio; Roll: T625; Enumeration District: 48, 4A, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; Arthur Westerhelweg, “A Real Compliment,” *Hospital School Journal*, December 1919-January 1920, 8.

[270] Arthur Westerhelweg, “A Real Compliment,” *Hospital School Journal*, December 1919-January 1920, 8.

but had no immediate plans to do so, employed as a stenographer in a wholesale grocery.[271] Like Browne and Sullivan, Westerhelweg highlighted how his experience of disability would aid him in such an effort: "There is nothing I would rather do than work amongst children, having been a cripple since ten years of age. I know very well, some of the things crippled children experience."[272] Westerhelweg did not remain wistful. Later that year, he contributed a piece to the *Hospital School Journal* on C. Lee Cook and whether physical disability spurred achievement; by 1924, Westerhelweg had published two pieces in *Hospital Social Service Magazine:* "The Mental Health of the Cripple" and a forward-thinking piece on disability representation, which was reprinted in *The Crippled Child* and will be discussed later in this chapter.[273] Westerhelweg also found his opportunity to teach. The historical record suggests that he changed his name shortly after the 1940 census to Arthur West and worked for the Seguin School under that name.[274]

Other readers merely offered their stories and support as proof of the successes that crippled children could make of themselves. Sullivan printed a letter from Albert E. Wuesteman, a Champaign, IL jeweler who sent in a dollar and his story. He traced his interest in the movement to his own identity as "a cripple—at one time obliged to crawl on all 'fours'" after falling off a fence and dislocating his hip at the age of 3.[275] Learning to walk took him five years

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[271] US Census Bureau, *Twelfth Census of the United States Census, 1920*; Census Place: Cincinnati Ward 3, Hamilton, Ohio; Roll: T625; Enumeration District: 48, 4A, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC

[272] Westerhelweg, "A Real Compliment," 8.

[273] Arthur Westerhelweg, "The Mental Health of the Cripple," *Hospital Social Service* VIII (1923): 251; "Those Hunchbacks of Notre Dame," *Hospital Social Service* X, no.1 (July 1924): 33-35; reprinted in *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1924, 10.

[274] "United States World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942," database with images, *FamilySearch*(https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:X5CP-FX9 : 8 November 2017), Arthur Edward West, 1942; citing NARA microfilm publication M1936, M1937, M1939, M1951, M1962, M1964, M1986, M2090, and M2097 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

[275] "Under the Editor's Lamp," *The Crippled Child*, February 1924, 3.

from that point, breaking his left arm four times and his right collarbone once in the process of learning to use crutches. These events contrasted with the life he had built for himself by 1924—proudly living with his wife in a fine home, "serv[ing his] fellowmen" at his jewelry and watch store, able to send his son to school for an optometry degree, playing the church organ every Sunday, and speaking in front of the state Congress on behalf of the disabled children of Illinois.[276] Wuesteman provided not just an example of success but of everyday comfort; additionally, he was a model for using one's experience and one's relative security to make political arguments for more vulnerable crippled children.

Approaches and Issues

What *was* the problem of the crippled child, and how did the movement's articulation of the problem change from earlier iterations? Part of what put the International Society into the unique position of being both rhetorically powerful and a blend of philanthropic, professional, and activist concerns was its flexibility. Its malleability, its willingness to encompass and encourage a multitude of efforts, led to the organization's long and arguably successful life throughout multiple iterations and divisions. Both disabled and nondisabled movement leaders looked far and wide for inspiration. Nora Groce has suggested that one of the reasons for the surprising success of the International Society for Crippled Children was its ability to build international connections. As Groce notes, what the International Society did masterfully was to think big—they envisioned a network of organizations working together across the country and even worldwide to tackle the "crippled child" problem.[277] Movement publications reprinted news articles on topics related to disability and disabled children from around the globe. Looking to

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[276] "Under the Editor's Lamp," *The Crippled Child*, February 1924, 3.
[277] Groce, "Disability and the League of Nations," 505.

other nations most commonly revealed subtle suggestions of what the United States should do; rarely did it serve as a negative example. In 1916, for instance, the *Van Leuven Browne Magazine* reported that war-wounded people in Austria were to be the recipients of land donated by public entities and private individuals.[278] This story, likely sourced by Sullivan, served as an argument for the United States to do its bit for crippled children by showing the benefits of state investment to crippled children. Likewise, the periodicals emphasized their connection to other medical, social, and reform efforts and agencies. Sullivan used this breadth to argue for readers' support of the magazine. In one blurb, he flanked an appeal to the reader's moral responsibility with evidence of the movement's broad reach. An image of children in wheelchairs and the headline "THE TIME TO ANSWER THEM IS NOW!" took the center of the piece—much as the narrative of obligation took center stage in the rhetoric of the larger movement. Two text boxes flanked this, one noting that the magazine "is cooperating with all legitimate agencies in the great work of reconstruction and education" and the other claiming that it "circulates in every civilized country and serves the actual workers in the field."[279]

Likewise, the movement was amenable to promoting all endeavors to help children with disabilities, even those that did not fall in strict line with the recommendations of the International Society or which were conducted outside of its headship. On a national level, the organization hoped to promote a specific set of ideas, but there was also fascinating work happening on local levels across the nation that was tied to and celebrated by the movement. Bess Williamson observes that disability design and access are often highly local, enmeshed in the culture and priorities of a specific location where the residents create spaces and enact

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[278] "Give Farms to Cripples," *Van Leuven Browne Magazine*, August 1916, Box 2, Folder 8, 30, Browne Papers.
[279] "The Time to Answer Them is Now!" *The Crippled Child*, January-February 1926, 15.

accomodations.[280] The structure of the International Society and its relaxed approach to participation in the movement—any effort or interest was welcomed and praised—meant that local groups and interested parties could take whatever steps they deemed useful under the umbrella of the movement. These magazines republished pieces from local papers lauding homes, hospitals, clinics, and people who were working toward medical care and education for crippled children.[281] One recurring *Crippled Child* section, "Here an' There an' Everywhere: Little Visits With the State Societies," collected local-level plans and events in associated crippled children's organizations nationally. Often local branches of the society held clinics or organized picnics and other outings for nearby crippled child populations. Survey taking, in an effort to identify how many and what sorts of disabled children lived in the area, was another popular activity, sometimes blended with the clinic projects. Some groups raised funds for the local, state, or international organization or hosted speakers to spread the word about the movement. However, divergences from these routine activities also appeared in this section of the periodical, revealing the less common and sometimes more active ways that organizations or localities addressed disabled children's issues in their community. Evanston, Illinois's city council, for instance, ordered that the sidewalk curbs be graded between the home and school of Hilda Lima, a young wheelchair user whose mother pushed her to school each day and struggled with the curbs.[282] Here, spatial accessibility was legally mandated on a local level decades before the ADA would bring the conversation to the national level (though this solution, of course,

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[280] Bess Williamson, "From Self-Help to Access: Design and the Struggle for Disability Rights," Plenary session at the Eighth International Health Humanities Consortium Meeting, Chicago, IL, March 30, 2019.

[281] Reprint from Kansas City Star, "'S-e-r-v-i-c-e' is the Way She Spells Success," *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1924, 12-13.

[282] The actions of Evanston's officials were contrasted with a cruel and lazy school principal elsewhere who refused to let a boy ascend to the grade to which he had been promoted because it was too troublesome to arrange access to that class, held on the building's second floor. "Here an' There an' Everywhere," *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1924, 11.

failed to benefit any wheelchair users who did not live between Lima's home and her school). The three different ideals of philanthropists, medical and social welfare workers, and disabled activists bore out in these activities, and movement literature celebrated all of them.

The most apparent ideological clash for the International Society—and it was minor—was in fact a critique of organizations with inflexible approaches. Rotarians' approach stemmed from their experience with Alva Bunker and his time at the VLBHS/Michigan Hospital School. Bunker's transformation had astounded them, and the Rotarians initially attributed his success to the remarkable surgical results.[283] Kelsey noted that at first, they had made the "common mistake" of thinking that crippled children needed more hospitals—if surgery helped in Bunker's case, increasing access to surgery should render similar results to others.[284] Upon further investigation, however, the Toledo Rotarians realized that existing hospitals were well equipped for the brief orthopedic surgeries prescribed for most crippled children, but many areas lacked convalescent homes for the children to recover and retrain afterwards.

The deemphasis of hospitals put them somewhat at odds with another group that became notable players in helping the crippled child during the same period: The Shriners. Preparations for Shriner's Hospitals began in the early 1920s after the fateful "Bubbles Speech," in which Noble Forrest Adair admonished the men present that the group ought to stop "blowing bubbles" and do charitable works rather than funding expensive halls.[285] The Shriners present were in favor—one of them claimed that they had learned from the Great War just past "[to] give

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[283] Barbara Floyd, "The Boy Who Changed the World," 80-82.
[284] Kelsey, "What Rotarians Can Do," 4.
[285] "Noble" is an honorific used for Shriners. Noble John D. McGilvray, *The Shriners Finest Hour* (San Francisco: Board of Governors, Shriners Hospital For Crippled Children, 1955), 4.

unselfishly of their services and money, and… the value of large forces in a united effort."[286] The Shriners put their large forces to use by building a series of sizeable hospitals across the nation.

These two groups of men—the Rotarians of the International Society and the Shriners—had much in common, but their approaches diverged. Broader social currents of discourse dealing with childhood, disability, and efficiency in the medical and philanthropic realms likely inspired both groups, as well as the conversations and work begun by such disabled writers as Browne and Sullivan. However, the Rotarians and the Shriners had an occasionally contentious relationship. The magazines of the International Society occasionally celebrated the Shriners' achievements of fundraising, hospital building, and outreach, yet they were also critical of the Shriners' methods, questioning their prioritization of large hospitals rather than small convalescent homes. A recap of the National Conference of Social Work for 1925 published in *The Crippled Child* noted that "the Society is also 'making every effort to persuade Shriners to discontinue their policy of building large hospitals, and as far as Ohio is concerned, at least, to spend this money for a number of modest convalescent homes, where operating costs may be low and still give children the care they need.'"[287] This difference is a large part of what sets the two groups apart. By building hospitals, Shriners allied themselves with mostly medical concerns. The International Society, by contrast, were flexible in their modes of attack—surveys, temporary clinics, day schools, hospital-schools, convalescent homes, camps, house calls were among their methods or allied organizations. They called not just for medical access but also for social change. It is for this reason that they became the central organization of the crippled children's movement, rather than merely a philanthropic endeavor.

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[286] McGilvray, *The Shriners Finest Hour*, 2.
[287] "Report of the National Conference of Social Work," *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1925, 14.

Education

As suggested by the above description, however, the movement did have a particular set of goals, which blended the legacy of Blanche Van Leuven Browne's work and the input of disabled activists with the concerns and methods of medical, social welfare, and philanthropic participants. Like Browne, the post-1918 crippled children's movement valued education. Joe Sullivan considered education the premier concern for aiding a disabled child. As discussed in the previous chapter, there was a distinction between "education" and "vocational education." When disabled activists called for education for crippled children, they often emphasized writing and reading, and general competencies in academic subjects. This was, of course, the sort of education that was the most influential in their own lives, making Browne, Sullivan, Lovewell, Westerhelweg, and Starrett writers, journalists, and teachers. It allowed them to realize what their lives had been missing and organize around what they wanted to do. It enabled them to craft statements and speeches designed to garner attention to their causes.

Employment was a critical part of their enthusiasm for education, but they thought beyond handwork and light manual labor. Activists believed in the mental capacity of crippled children—they were suited not merely for basketweaving (a favorite institutional activity and moneymaker employed frequently in all types of institutions), but for complex, thoughtful professions or acts of self-expression.[288] Many issues through the early 1920s of *The Crippled Child* contained a subscription and donation blank headed with the slogan "What a Small

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[288] For example, see Sally French, ed., *An Oral History of the Education of Visually Impaired People: Telling Stories for Inclusive Futures* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 2006), 23; Olivia Anne M. Habana, "Appropriating America? American Schoolbooks in Philippine Classrooms, 1900-1912," in *Travelling Goods, Travelling Moods: Varieties of Cultural Appropriation (1850-1950)*, ed. Christian Huck and Stefan Bauernschmidt (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2012), 129.

Amount, a Dollar—Just to Help Some Limping Scholar."[289] Within the pages of movement periodicals, crippled children were scholars who faced obstacles that could be relieved in part through the generosity of readers. These donations went to support the Society as a whole.

Promotion of education in practice through the movement often took the form of supporting specialized schools for crippled children, including hospital-schools and day schools. The idea of separate schools for disabled children has a complicated history. Disability historians Longmore and Miller have critiqued the hospital school for its exclusion and warehousing of disabled children away from public spaces.[290] Contemporary disabled activists, however, found liberatory potential in the "crippled child school." Separate schooling was far from the only acceptable option to disabled and nondisabled movement leaders—many agreed mainstream schools could be beneficial as well, as long as disabled students could access them. This access, however, was far from certain even in the rare instances that local school officials or charity workers wanted to help disabled students attend school.

For Sullivan, separate schools boasted the highest potential for physical access. It likely seemed too unwieldy to refit a public school for crippled children. Building less expensive schools specifically designed to fit the needs of children with mobility impairments represented a solution to the problem of access, not a sequestration mechanism.[291] Blackboards, elevators, toilets, seats, gymnasium—all of these features needed particular attention for a school to truly serve children with physical disabilities. He went further, arguing the political point that "the crippled child, not as an individual but as a class, is entitled to just such buildings."[292] Cities such

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[289] *The Crippled Child,* Nov-Dec 1924, 14.
[290] Longmore and Miller, "A Philosophy of Handicap," 76.
[291] Joe F. Sullivan, "The Crippled Child and His Schooling," *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1924, 3.
[292] Joe F. Sullivan, "The Crippled Child and His Schooling," *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1924, 3.

as Detroit, Cleveland, Minneapolis, and Chicago were implementing these at public expense—other cities, he predicted, would soon follow suit. And, Sullivan held, disabled children were entitled to this consideration—a school built to accommodate them from the beginning—rather than being carried upstairs by other students or confined only to classes held on the lower floors of a schoolhouse, although such a situation was preferable to no education at all. These writers' call for separate institutions for crippled children was not a call for separation so much as it was a demand for guaranteed physical access.

A separate school would also ensure that children with disabilities received an education that would focus on their needs and provide them with the tools to become confident and capable citizens. Access to a proper academic curriculum was only the beginning of what Sullivan wanted for crippled children's education. Children with disabilities also deserved a skilled teacher who could understand the feelings of the child as well as the material to be delivered. They should receive a full education that would outfit them for a vocation, including both mental and hand skills. They should also receive what Sullivan termed "a thorough course in esthetic training," which would teach them to despise "distorted mental views" and to find beauty in their disabled bodies—all to the end that any physical limitations would pale in comparison to the strength of the person's mind.[293] Each of these things could conceivably appear in a mainstream school, but separate schools controlled by people involved with the movement promised more attention to these factors.

Sometimes, former crippled children themselves were the donors enabling the construction and expansion of educational institutions for children with physical disabilities. The Dowling School was an institution in Minneapolis that blended the influence of disability

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[293] Joe F. Sullivan, "The Crippled Child and His Schooling," *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1924, 3-4.

experience and Rotarian philanthropy.[294] Like the International Society, the Dowling School had multiple origin stories. It was named for Michael Dowling, a politician and rehabilitation advocate who lost both legs, one arm, and the fingers of the other hand in a snowstorm as a child in the 1880s.[295] The initial version of the school was imagined in 1919 by the Minneapolis Board of Education, who opened the school in 1920 after asking the Rotary Club to conduct a survey to determine the number of crippled children in the area (turning up about forty).[296] One telling of the origin story holds that Dr. Nils Juell, a member of the Board of Education, was inspired to do so after meeting "a crippled girl, who was able only to sit by the window day after day," a description that evokes the images of children sadly gazing out windows discussed previously.[297] Upon its opening in 1920, housed inside of an old church, Rotarians and Elks not only provided buses to transport Dowling's students but also agitated for the state to adopt legislation to provide for its financial support. The Minnesota State Law for Crippled Children was approved in April of 1921, offering the school about two hundred and fifty dollars per pupil.[298] In 1924 the school received a massive donation from William Henry Eustis—virtually all of the wealth the former mayor, lawyer, and real estate investor had amassed in his forty-three years of work. The donation included a site for a new building and a trust to provide the school with an endowment; it also netted Eustis "six proposals from women he never saw," according to the Minneapolis

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[294] The Dowling School and its connection to the International Society will be discussed further in chapter three.
[295] "Dowling, Michael John 'M.J.'" Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, accessed March 4, 2021, https://www.lrl.mn.gov/legdb/fulldetail?id=12589.
[296] This intriguing detail—that the Rotary Club was approached about a survey of disabled children—suggests some inconsistencies in the International Society's story of how Rotary came to be involved in crippled children's work; it is however possible that this was an anomaly. Pamphlet, Dowling School for Crippled Children, 116.I.1.10F, Minneapolis Public Schools, Michael Dowling School Urban Environmental Magnet Records, 1895-2012. Minnesota Historical Society. St. Paul, MN (hereafter cited as Dowling School Papers).
[297] Ruth Thompson, "Minnesota Memories," unknown newspaper clipping, 116.I.1.10F, Dowling School Papers.
[298] "Minnesota is Forging to the Front," *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1924, 14.

Journal.[299] The distinction in tone of reportage between the mainstream press and the movement periodical was striking. A reprint from the Associated Press featured in *The Crippled Child* gently noted that Eustis was "himself handicapped by a physical infirmity since childhood;" the captioned photo accompanying the piece boisterously claimed Eustis as a "lifelong cripple" standing alongside "a flock of his little crippled friends to whom he has just given over one million dollars to found a big institution that will save them from the sort of suffering he has endured all his life."[300] The caption, likely authored by Sullivan, claimed Eustis as one of their own group and highlighted the connection between his experiences, his gift, and the future generations of crippled children that would benefit from his work. *The Crippled Child* and the *Hospital School Journal* reported similar legacies regularly.[301]

It is worth noting that nondisabled members of the movement tended to specifically emphasize separate schools more frequently than did disabled activists, attributing to them all sorts of mental and emotional benefits for their students. While Sullivan lamented the inaccessibility of the "normal" schools, nondisabled advocates were more likely to highlight the unsuitability of mainstream schools for disabled children—even those who were already attending them with few problems. In a speech reprinted in *The Crippled Child*, "Daddy" Edgar Allen lamented that of the seventy-five percent of crippled children that did not need hospital care, many were attending public schools if they attended school at all. He argued that these schools were not built with the needs of these children in mind, and that special schools for children with physical disabilities were necessary to educate these children properly. There, in

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[299] "Six Proposals From Women He Never Saw Go Into Eustis Wastebasket; '30 Years Too Late,'" *Minneapolis Journal*, June 1, 1923.
[300] "Gives Millions to Help Cripples," *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1924, 7.
[301] For example, Joe F. Sullivan, "A Great Christmas Legacy for Crippled Children," *Hospital School Journal*, November-December 1926, 4.

addition to other benefits, they could receive a "prevocational" education.[302] In another piece, Ed Kelsey highlighted the need for education for most disabled children to make a living in adulthood. He also emphasized the cruelty of nondisabled children mocking children with disabilities on the playground if they attended a mainstream school as evidence of the need for separate schools.[303]

Sullivan's role as editor of the magazines in which movement texts appeared allowed him to have the final say, however subtly. The captioned images chosen to accompany Allen's piece about separate schools suggest the managing editor of *The Crippled Child* may have wished to point the interpretation of the speech in a direction more akin to his own stance on education than to Allen's actual words. The photos and captions were likely chosen and authored by managing editor Sullivan, especially as the piece was originally a verbal address by Allen and probably did not come with photos. One of the three images shows a little girl wearing a white dress with a white bow in her hair. She is sitting in a wagon, squinting into the camera. The caption emphasized not ineffective educational practices or social stigmas, but physical barriers: "Her mind may soar to the skies but the wheels of her little wagon will not ascend the steps of the regular public schools."[304] This pairing of text and image suggests the ways artful juxtaposition not only contrasted the different tenors of ideas at play in the movement but at times was used to alter or guide the way to a particular interpretation of an article or amend the argument.

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[302] Edgar "Daddy" Allen, "Education of Crippled Children," *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1924, 8.

[303] Ed Kelsey, "What Rotarians Can Do and What It Means to Them," *The Crippled Child* July-August 1924, 4.

[304] Allen, "Education of Crippled Children," *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1924, 8.

Data and Emotion

Some of the movement's goals resembled those of older philanthropic concepts, like charity organization societies. As with many Progressive organizations, the ISCC voraciously collected information. They conducted surveys on the numbers of crippled children locally, statewide, and nationwide to gather information to guide their next steps. Statistics, surveys, and data marked their achievements. They collected this data to offer to the nation as evidence that the problem of the crippled child needed attention.[305] More than that, they wanted to be the central hub for information on the topic, establishing themselves as a "go-to" for knowledge and strategies on dealing with the crippled child problem. They succeeded at this to an extent—by the mid-1920s, the US Children's Bureau was frequently referring cases to them.[306]

They also used this information to support their claims about what crippled children needed. Crippled children's advocates frequently encountered doubts that such children existed in their communities at all or that they were present in enough numbers to be worth doing anything out of the ordinary. Censuses could serve to combat this idea. Darby Day, president of the Illinois Society for Crippled Children and a member of the International Society's Advisory Council, contributed an anecdote to *The Crippled Child* about a small Illinois town in which doctors thought there were seventeen crippled children before they took a census. Their census discovered thirty-three. The local school conducted another census, finding fifty-three. When the Rotary Club took its own measure, it discovered 152 crippled children.[307] In short, one could never be too careful in information collection—there could always be something previous

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[305] For example, Joe F. Sullivan, "Editorial," *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1924, 3.

[306] For example, Emma O. Lundberg to J.E. Shearer, August 24, 1923; Robe Carl White to John C. McKenzie, November 10, 1924; Mary Leete to J.S. Gaul, October 16, 1924; Unsigned to Edward Erickson, January 28, 1924; Emma O. Lundberg to Margaret M. Lothrop, March 2. 1923.

[307] Darby Day, "Schools for Crippled Children," *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1924, 7.

investigators had missed. The surveys also served to confirm their preferred methods. In Edgar Allen's "Education of Crippled Children," he used survey data to support the International Society's preference for smaller convalescent homes and schools over large hospitals.[308] The text estimated that only a quarter of US crippled children needed hospital care. Instead, they needed training, convalescent care, and education—all things the International Society provided and promoted.

This devotion to data should not imply a lack of sentiment. Movement literature is flush with emotional declarations about the work undertaken and the children served. For nondisabled philanthropists, writing and speaking about the movement served as an appropriately masculine way to express emotions like pathos, generosity, gratitude, love; it allowed them to show gentleness while still maintaining appropriate middle-class White masculinity. Kelsey described a particularly moving gathering: "You know that men rarely ever cry. If affected, they blow their noses or cough. But that day tears came and strong men wept tears of joy and were unashamed."[309] They authored poems about their experiences with the movement— "The Morning Feast" has to be the most overwrought ode ever penned about a conference breakfast—and with the children it served. They were frequently prone to inspirational poetry, authored by gentlemen overcome with emotion when confronted with disabled tots. "All Straight Inside," one such example, apparently so affected the magazine's first editor that he printed it on the cover, along with a large image of a squinting child on crutches and a pensive photo of the poet, Pastor Allen A. Stockdale of Toledo, Ohio.[310] This poem had the nondisabled Stockdale taking

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[308] Edgar Allen, "Education of Crippled Children," *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1924, 8-9.
[309] Kelsey, "What Rotarians Can Do," *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1924, 5.
[310] Cover, *The Crippled Child*, November 1923.

on the voice of "Cripple Billy," who had a "straight" heart and soul in contrast to his "lame" legs, and thus would be on an even playing field with everyone else when all got to heaven.[311]

This use of emotion characterizes a critical difference between the contributions of disabled and nondisabled writers in the pages of these magazines. The speeches, schedules, letters, and plans from Rotarians show evidence that these men listened to the disabled writers who set out to help them understand the crippled child and their needs. Yet these materials also often waxed rhapsodic in a way disabled contributors did not do—about the pitiful nature of children they had seen, about the goodness of the work they were doing, and the height of emotion they felt over their labors on behalf of this vulnerable group. The former Director of Social Service at Cleveland's Association for the Crippled and Disabled, Margaret Wagner, addressed these emotions in her written reflections on 1924's International Society conference in Detroit. She urged readers and attendees to act on the affective experiences they had undergone together at that year's meeting, living out the "spirit of the Conference" rather than allowing their emotions to dissipate.[312] Hiring a man with a disability because of his capabilities, buying a pencil from a street vendor instead of just giving him alms, and offering their enthusiasm and money to the movement were all ways that Wagner suggested attendees put these feelings to use.

Perhaps the clearest example of this affective disconnect is disabled activists' hatred for pity. The title of Donahey's 1919 piece is evocative: "Don't Pity Us Folks With Physical Defects;" the subtitle expanded "It Is Bad For Us and Bad For You—As I Know From My Own Personal Experience."[313] Donahey detailed the successes and challenges of her life, all the while advising the reader that pity was not only unnecessary but actively detrimental to her and others

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[311] Cover, *The Crippled Child*, November 1923.

[312] Margaret Wagner, "Afterthoughts—The Conference of the International Society for Crippled Children," *The Crippled Child*, April 1924, 7.

[313] Donahey, "Don't Pity Us," 12.

like her. Pity, as Donahey described it, could even kill—she described another young woman who had lost a hand and whose family "pitied her into a stage of perpetual sorrow, into the loss of all pleasure, and, finally, I have been told, into loss of life. She was killed by pity."[314] So when she recounted her life's successes, it was not in service of inspiring nondisabled people, or even to inspire disabled people, to achieve. It was to convince nondisabled people that they should not pity people with disabilities because not only was there no need to do so, but it was counterproductive. Gendered differences were no reason for pity, either. After detailing the many things she could do with her prosthetic arm and her five remaining fingers on the other hand, she imagined an angry mother of a disabled son might complain to her: "you may have been able to do all you say and get along very nicely in your home; but my boy will have to go out into the world and work!"[315] She replied by moving on to her career achievements: she had, just like a young man might, gone out into the world and worked as a reporter for a New York paper and then for the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Throughout, Donahey drives her point home by employing a humorous, flippant tone. Perhaps more delightful than the piece is its addendum. Donahey tells the reader that she wrote the article intending to publish it without her byline, but Sullivan convinced her it would be more effective with her name attached. He also requested a bit of a biography, which Donahey here provided—a background moving between Ohio and New York, a longstanding desire to write—"The only trouble was I never could decide whether I would be a second George Eliot or Louisa May Alcott"—and her career and family life.[316] Donahey wrote for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, where she met her husband. In the main piece, Donahey described her impairment with a casual

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[314] Donahey, "Don't Pity Us," 12.
[315] Donahey, "Don't Pity Us," 12.
[316] Donahey, "Don't Pity Us," 12.

air. A bone disease had necessitated the amputation of her right hand and the removal of some of her hip bone; she was "pretty well banged up for a while, and the hip has never really ceased from troubling, though the hand has stayed contentedly at rest."[317] She nicknamed her artificial arm "Peggy… it being the child of a peg of wood and a piece of rubber."[318]

This discussion of emotion threads back to the quotation from Joe Sullivan that begins this chapter—people with disabilities talked about "actual life" rather than their service to humanity; their personal stories contained emotional topics, but a tone of stoicism served them better than pathos. However, the emotional and moral content of the movement's rhetoric was perhaps one reason why philanthropy and activism mingled for so long within it. Appeals to morality drove charitable generosity—it is wrong not to give— but they also drove social change—it is wrong to deny rights. Whichever wrong one wished to prevent, one needed to act out of a moral impulse, and the movement as a whole aimed to help readers do so.

Medicine and Social Welfare

For the International Society for Crippled Children, medical care and social welfare practices became central to their goals in a way it had never been for Browne. For Browne, treatment started as somewhat incidental and over time became downright suspect. Throughout, what she aimed to provide was a place for children to go where treatments would not interrupt the more significant educational and emotional development of their young lives. By contrast, Sullivan used a mixture of his own experience and an appeal to expert knowledge to argue that nature would not cure disabled children: "Too many parents nowadays believe that their children will outgrow their physical handicaps. I know differently. You know differently. Every surgeon

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[317] Donahey, "Don't Pity Us," 12.
[318] Donahey, "Don't Pity Us," 12.

knows differently. It takes more than natural growth to straighten and reconstruct a crooked body."[319] This statement represented something of a centrist position, tying together the movement's multiple interests—we can have medicine and education, we can be activists and also we can be healed.

Attention to medical ideas in these texts also showcases the evolving courtship of Sullivan, his journals, and the crippled children's movement with medical control in the pages of the *Hospital School Journal*. As Byrom describes, Sullivan was willing to incorporate and facilitate medical concerns and control over rehabilitation, which was one reason why medical interests were able to gain dominance in disability issues.[320] A particularly dramatic juxtaposition occurred in a 1919 issue of the *Hospital School Journal*, in which one page held a theoretical piece likening the hospital-school to a human factory; a letter home from a child at the hospital school; a photo and short article on two women who taught Sunday school at the Hospital-School; and a letter from "famous surgeon" H.W. Orr of Lincoln, Nebraska. He noted that he had just returned from Europe and was pleased to return home to find a copy of the *Hospital-School Journal* that indicated the institution was doing so well. Orr seemed to hope that Sullivan would incorporate more orthopedic professional literature into the crippled children's literature. He informed Sullivan—and in turn, his readers through the publication of the letter in the magazine—that having taken the editorship of the *Journal of Orthopedic Surgery*, he was placing Sullivan on the mailing list "because of your very great interest in these subjects and because I hope you will occasionally find material in our Journal which you will think it of interest to your readers to reproduce in your journal."[321] This letter not only showcased medical

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[319] Joe F. Sullivan, "The Value of Education to the Crippled Child," *The Crippled Child*, March 1924, 3.
[320] Byrom, "Joseph F. Sullivan and the Discourse of 'Crippledom.'"
[321] H.W. Orr, "Famous Surgeon Returns Home," *Hospital School Journal*, July-August 1919, 6.

interest in the magazine and disabled children's work in general; it also perhaps served as a warning of, or a way of gauging interest in, a turn towards including more medical, specifically orthopedic, writing in the magazine.

The letter from the child on the same page promoted medical control from a different angle. The letter, written by Thressa Ilbrink, was written ostensibly by a child in the hospital-school to her parents. Her review of the place was, naturally, glowing: the Michigan institution is "lots better than any hospital I have been in," and there was so much to do that she had no time to get lonely—among her recent pastimes were sitting under the trees and eating "ice cream, crackerjack and lemonade."[322] Ilbrink was also enthusiastic about her medical provider, Dr. Blodgett, and showed both her bravery and the appeal of medical intervention when she declared, "I am not afraid to have an operation, for I know it will be for my own good. I am not the only one."[323] Ilbrink's letter wove together the creation of community among the children at the institution with the promotion of orthopedic surgery as a useful treatment for childhood disability. This piece also echoes the childhood reflections of Blanche Browne, as discussed in the first chapter. Like Browne, Ilbrink believed in the scientific efficacy of the care she received and saw it not only as an event that impacted her but a point of commonality with other disabled children. As chapter three will discuss further, children's writing showcased how thoroughly the three wings of the movement blended—disabled children perceived the goals of medicine, philanthropy, and activism as compatible and all part of the good experiences they related in the arms of movement institutions and organizations.

Movement literature also offered resources and encouragement for medical and professional aims. One piece provided instructions for how local clubs could conduct an

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[322] Thressa Ilbrink, "Pupil-Patient Writes Home," *Hospital School Journal*, July-August 1919, 6.
[323] Ilbrink, "Pupil-Patient Writes Home," 6.

orthopedic clinic should they want to organize one in their community.[324] Medicine was not the only science in play—social service allied itself with principles of reason as well. Harry Howett, the Executive Secretary of the ISCC, was also the director of the Child-Caring Division of Ohio's Children's Welfare Department. He penned a piece describing the work to date and praising its direction. However, he also noted that it needed to be firmly grounded in rational considerations: "While the original enthusiasm for the late work for crippled children in Ohio may have been based upon sympathy for the crippled child and the desire to lend a hand and participate in the 'human touch' which is so necessary, a magnificent social movement like this must be founded upon proper social and economic tenets to endure—on science."[325] In other words, old-fashioned sympathy was no engine for such a movement. Both social and medical sciences had to take precedence in this effort—emotion may inspire a worker, but it must result in action. Notably, more radical, activist impulses take no space in his piece—despite evidence to the contrary throughout the rest of the issue, he seems to assume that only the nondisabled are involved in this movement. Or, perhaps, his audience is specifically the nondisabled.

Medical care also served as a form of public outreach or a method of access to other important goals of the movement. The 1923 piece on conducting an orthopedic clinic gave four objectives that such a clinic accomplished, and three were more about changing people's minds about disability than about providing medical care. There was the wish to "develop in the affected individual, his family and the community a proper attitude toward the physically handicapped," as well as a point about educating the public and community about the causes of crippling and one about the collective responsibility for supporting and educating people with

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[324] "Suggestions for Organization and Conduct of an Orthopedic Clinic," *The Crippled Child*, November 1923, 9.
[325] Harry Howett, "Social Standards in the Care of the Crippled Child," *The Crippled Child,* May-June 1924, 8.

disabilities.[326] Medical clinics and care could be a route to educating both the disabled and nondisabled public. The first and the last goal were particularly critical, as they dealt not just with scientific explanations for the social outcome of disability but also articulated a more moral and activist inclination to change people's minds about responsibilities and rights related to people with disabilities.

Similarly, some stories presented medical care as the solution to struggles to access education. Kids were able to access education because they found access to medical care. For example, Mathilda Saylor, a "Kentucky mountain girl" who longed to go to school both for the social and educational benefits: "I wanted to play and learn to spell and read."[327] At the age of ten she set out to do so— wrapping rags and paper around her knees and crawling a mile over the mountain, which took four hours each direction. After three weeks of this, her knees became so injured she could no longer make the journey. It was not until five years later that she was able to resume her formal education. This coup was achieved not by receiving a ride to school or enrollment in a hospital-school. Rather, after being discovered by a passerby and referred to a Red Cross nurse, Saylor journeyed to Louisville, Kentucky to receive a series of operations, then taken to Berea College where she started on fifth-grade work.[328] The medical treatment—the "cure"—had to come before the access to education. One could see this as an argument for the use of medicine to cure disability, but it could also be interpreted as foregrounding education; medicine was merely the means to the ultimate goal of attending school.

However present the medical approach during the early 1920s, it ultimately shared space with the narratives and arguments of disabled activists, which alternately supported and

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[326] "Suggestions for Organization and Conduct of an Orthopedic Clinic," *The Crippled Child*, November 1923, 9.
[327] Mathilda Saylor, "The Story of My Life," *The Crippled Child*, March-April 1925, 7.
[328] Saylor, "The Story of My Life," 7.

challenged assumptions about medical approaches to disability. The success of this may perhaps be best expressed by the proclamation of one Stockton, California doctor referenced in the Little Visits column, who gave a speech in support of education which contended "it would be better to leave a child dependent upon charity than to neglect to educate it while effecting physical corrections."[329] The movement of the 1920s joined more traditional medical and philanthropic concerns with the priorities articulated by disabled activists and writers, pushing to do more than just provide medical care and charity. It built on Browne's interest in a unified but exclusive group, her emphasis on education, and on continuing relationships with the children, and pushed for state involvement in enacting these goals. Perhaps most significantly, it retained an emphasis on hearing and publishing disabled voices—though not always a willingness to act on everything they had to say.

Social and Legal Change

Critically, the crippled children's movement as a whole was not content to provide services or connect children to already existing resources. Members of the International Society firmly believed in working themselves out of a (generally unpaid) job; they wanted legislation on state, federal, and local levels to provide disabled children care and education.[330] Because of their social capital, these philanthropists often convinced the state to take on responsibility for some of their efforts even without the passage of additional legislation. Ed Kelsey claimed that when they started a crippled children's school in Toledo, they initially had to provide transportation to get pupils to and from campus and lunch for the children, as well as other

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[329] "Little Visits," *The Crippled Child*, March-April 1926, 9.
[330] Hitchcock, "The Creation of Federal Services."

expenses. The Board of Education took over all of these responsibilities by 1924.[331] Likewise, ISCC members were the architects of the Ohio Plan, an approach to state aid for disabled children that inspired a broad variety of copycat legislation in other states.[332]

Disabled activists also pursued legislative recourse, as discussed in the case of jeweler A.E. Wuesteman above. One local history of Kenosha credits the involvement of "Miss Dorothy Schackmuth, herself a cripple" with "great service in forwarding" the building of schools in the city due to her activism for children with disabilities in Wisconsin.[333] Mabel Starrett's piece on Schackmuth in *The Crippled Child* noted that Schackmuth's appeals invoked not just the need for aid but the language of rights: "Dorothy Schackmuth knew that her own wheelchair, her limited powers and lack of finances prevented her playing the role of a great philanthropist. And if she could she wouldn't for she wanted her state to realize the rights of the crippled child as forceful and fine as those of any child of the nation."[334] She did not merely wish to inspire donations; she wanted to ensure the rights of the crippled child to education. To accomplish this, she first collected facts, then employed the fruits of her research in a letter-writing campaign. She began by advocating the establishment of one or two rooms for disabled children in Kenosha's public schools. Instead, the Board established a tutoring program to travel to the homes of 13 local crippled children and invited Schackmuth to become a pupil in it herself, an outcome she had not anticipated but accepted eagerly. This experience made her realize that, in Starrett's words, "the passage of legislative measures would be necessary to accomplish permanent good."[335] Schackmuth then became involved with Senator Conrad Scherer and the

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[331] Ed Kelsey, "What Rotarians Can Do," *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1924, 4.

[332] Walter B. Underwood, "The Development of the Ohio Plan," *The Crippled Child*, August 1928, 26-27, 46-47; Floyd, "Boy Who Changed the World;" Floyd, *From Institutions to Independence.*

[333] Carrie Cropley, *Kenosha: From Pioneer Village to Modern City, 1835-1935* (Kenosha, W.I.: Kenosha County Historical Society, 1958), 157.

[334] Mabel Starrett, "Dorothy Schackmuth: the Girl Who Inspired Her State," *The Crippled Child*, January 1934, 73.

[335] Starrett, "Dorothy Schackmuth," 75.

444-S bill, which successfully established state funding for crippled children’s education in 1927. Previous to the passage of this bill, only Milwaukee had provided aid for crippled children’s education; by 1936, there were eight orthopedic and three hospital-schools educating over 500 children in the state.[336]

Activists also used their resources to pursue or advocate for access to physical spaces. In addition to educational access, Schackmuth took spatial access into her own hands, replacing her parent-provided wicker wheelchair, which was so unmaneuverable it left her a “helpless invalid,” with a self-designed three-wheeled chair that she had made to order by a local carpenter after saving up the meager proceeds from her embroidery work.[337] The language of “helpless invalid” does rhetorical work in this instance; she was not “helpless” or an “invalid,” but suboptimal mobility devices made her so. She also designed several other access-minded tools, such as a toothbrush and a hairbrush, patterned to make it possible for her to groom herself without aid.

Other activists called for broader physical access, even advocating structural changes to private spaces. Reinette Lovewell contributed a variety of articles to *The Crippled Child*, none more prescient than “Have You Hand Railings on Your Front Steps?” [338] The institutions started and promoted by the movement dedicated much attention to physical access, touting their single-level layouts or ramps or elevators. Lovewell’s piece argued for a further step—making one’s own home as accessible as possible. She did not call for legislation to mandate stairs to have hand railings (which would have been an odd level of government oversight on home construction); she put the onus on homeowners to make these changes willingly. Her piece began with a straightforward report of the author’s friend Al Harriman, who decided to put railings on

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[336] Starrett, “Dorothy Schackmuth,” 75.
[337] Starrett, “Dorothy Schackmuth,” 75.
[338] Reinette Lovewell, “Rubbing in Salt,” Nov-Dec 1924, 5; Reinette Lovewell, “Have You Hand Railings on Your Front Steps?” *The Crippled Child,* July-Aug 1924, 6.

his front steps in the spirit of "hospitality" after seeing a thirteen-year-old girl in his wife's old neighborhood who wore a leg brace and could not get up or down steps without them. Harriman did not want to shut anyone out of his home and emphasized that he installed the railings to welcome anyone who wanted to visit. Lovewell praised the decision, telling of her own experience as a child encountering steps without hand railings: "There were four steps in front of the village school which I attended years ago. I used to have to sit down to make the grade, soaking my skirts on rainy days, and that wholly unnecessary performance is still seared in my memory."[339] Lovewell's piece tied together a report of current news with her own personal narrative to support its significance, and ended with an assertion that all stairs should be equipped with railings, punctuated by an inquiry to the reader: "Is it wholly out of the question? *Is* it?"[340]

Lovewell's demand for access in "Have You Hand Railings on Your Front Steps?" went beyond purely practical access to public spaces for work and education. It also centered a personal or social perspective in which community and connections with neighbors and friends were viable and essential goals for disabled people. Many of Lovewell's articles dealt with this idea of personal connection or identity. Whereas Joe Sullivan had extended Browne's emphasis on education, Lovewell had picked up the torch of emotions being meaningful. It was not enough to make a child efficient; a child needed to be supported, to have her morale boosted; more practically, she needed to have a world accessible to her. Sullivan emphasized access to education; Lovewell called for accessible private homes, to make it easier for people with impairments that made climbing stairs a challenge to visit their friends and neighbors-- and,

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[339] Lovewell, "Have You Hand Railings on Your Front Steps?" 6.
[340] Lovewell, "Have You Hand Railings on Your Front Steps?" 6.

perhaps, to encourage nondisabled folks to consider the possibility of making a disabled acquaintance.

Disabled activists also called for shifts in public portrayals of disabled people. Like Browne, Sullivan's approach to images was informed by a conscious interest in presenting disabled children as appealing and intelligent. Like Blanche Van Leuven Browne, Sullivan was aware of the power and perils of images in conveying stories about crippled children. Although he was not above a few ploys for philanthropic sympathy, he avoided showing disabled children in situations of poverty or disarray. In Sullivan's piece for *The Hospital School Journal*, "The Recreation of Alva Bunker," the author had initially hesitated to include a before photo of Bunker in the piece. Bunker, however, urged him to put it in, in the hopes it might help someone else.[341] Like Browne, Sullivan used images in an evocative way. The cover of his first issue featured a boy looking wistfully out of a window at the reader. Captioned "Sentenced for Life—Except for You," the image evoked a Victorian sensibility of pity and called for the charity of readers.[342] However, the image overlaid this on the narrative of the image. This child was not pitiful because of visible disablement—none is apparent in the image. Rather, the old-fashioned way of treating the child by sequestering him indoors was the tragedy from which the reader needed to save the child.

His approach to images also shied away from typical medical uses. The title of one image-focused piece, "As They Were and As They Are Now," may seem like a setup for the photosets that medical and rehabilitative journals commonly published—before and after shots

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[341] Floyd, "The Boy Who Changed the World," 79; Joe F. Sullivan, "The Re-Creation of Alva Bunker," *Hospital School Journal*, July-August 1920, 7. The title is a play on *The Re-Creation of Brian Kent*, a book and film from the period. The titular re-creation is a moral one; Sullivan's choice to link these two both highlights the links that he and other Progressive reformers saw between moral and physical disability.
[342] Cover, *The Crippled Child*, May-June 1924.

of patients, focusing on their bodies and often leaving them exposed to the gaze of the camera and the reader.[343] Sullivan's version in the *Hospital School Journal* subverted this paradigm. There were images, but as in Browne's family-style photos, the children were well dressed in both before and after, rather than poorly dressed in one to show contrast or in both to provide clinical and visual access to the body. (In fact, the only nude children in that issue are nondisabled, in a reprint from a physical culture magazine about reproducing the fun of the beach in your own yard).[344] Several show crippled children in groups, rather than being clinically isolated within the frame. Moreover, these images were anchored by contextualizing text—not medical definitions but self- narrations. Authored by the subjects of the photos, they provide updates on their lives, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Whereas Sullivan used his practices surrounding images to make an implicit argument about representation, Arthur Westerhelweg directed his attention to cultural criticism of regressive disability images. In "Those Hunchbacks of Notre Dame," Arthur Westerhelweg lambasted Lon Chaney's recent film performance, in which the famous character actor donned makeup and prostheses to embody the disabled Quasimodo. As Westerhelweg commented acidly, "It is said that he spent about three hours each day with his personal make-up, and I am inclined to think that he spent two and a half hours too many."[345] Chaney's interpretation of Hugo's character was broad and grotesque; moreover, it was one of many such offenses in public images of people with disabilities.

Critically, he admitted that the characterization was not entirely untrue; however, the hopelessness and dependency that Quasimodo and other disabled characters evoked stemmed

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[343] "As They Were and As They Are Now," *Hospital School Journal*, May-June 1919, 2-3.
[344] Bernarr Macfadden, "Ocean Beach in Your Own Back Yard," *Hospital School Journal*, May-June 1919, 10.
[345] Arthur Westerhelweg, "Those Hunchbacks of Notre Dame," *Hospital Social Service* X, no.1 (July 1924): 33-35; reprinted in *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1924, 10.

from their alienation and neglected circumstance: “The cripple is a social being without a society in which to move.” The dysfunction was rooted in childhood, stemming from a frustrated adolescence in which “the incapacity of the body, the weakness of the flesh, cannot keep pace with a vigorous mind and spirit.” This status explained Quasimodo’s negative traits; it also demonstrated the difficulties that real people with disabilities had and the intervention needed.

Most radically, he was savvy to what disability theorists David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder would later call narrative prosthesis: the functions that people with disabilities served in narratives meant for those without disabilities.[346] Mitchell and Snyder have highlighted the role of these characters as narrative devices; they convey nothing about the lived experience of disability but rather serve merely as a metaphor for nondisabled concerns. In short, they say more about nondisabled society than they do about disability at any given moment in time. Similarly, Westerhelweg noted that these disabled characters served a function in popular narratives that would need to be replaced by something else if the movement met its goals and reinterpreted people with disabilities as capable, not hopeless. Westerhelweg allowed that “the cripple will be with us for many years to come,” but contended that the multipronged philanthropic, medical, and activist goals of the movement would eradicate the hopeless state attached to disability. Thus, characters like Quasimodo would eventually have no function or place in a world where a cripple was not hopeless. “What then,” Westerhelweg queried sardonically at article’s end, “will some of our authors use for a substitute in their emotion appealing character stock?”[347]

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[346] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).
[347] Arthur Westerhelweg, “Those Hunchbacks of Notre Dame,” 35.

Conclusion

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, disabled activists used their experiences and their expertise in disability issues to advocate for more socially focused approaches to disabled children. Far from being mere symbols of the future of the movement's work, or cautionary tales of what could be without medical or philanthropic investment, they were instead powerful advocates for education, personal connection, and social change for people with physical disabilities. These activists limited their definitions of crippled childhood to exclude children with intellectual disabilities as well as (usually) blind or deaf children for political and public relations reasons; they also neglected disabled children of color, focusing on the children that reminded the overwhelmingly White group most of themselves. The approaches of these activists overlapped with the goals of the nondisabled professional and philanthropic advocates in the movement and frequently influenced the tenor of the movement's goals; however, they also articulated their opinions about issues like education and media depictions of disability in contrasting ways.

Although adults dominated the mainstream organization periodicals, the crippled children they served also expressed themselves there and through other avenues. *The Crippled Child* published a recurring column that collected children's letters and stories. Moreover, institutions sponsored by the movement, such as the Toledo Home for Crippled Children and the Dowling School in Minneapolis, promoted the values of education and self-expression through fostering student-created publications. The next chapter will take a closer look at the role of writing by disabled children, highlighting the continuities in the process of fostering crippled children's writing and education even as the leadership of the movement turned to more expert control and revealing how disabled children interpreted their roles in ways both similar to and different from the disabled adults who saw their own childhood selves in them.

CHAPTER 3: "WE LIKE TO HEAR OF THE LETTERS SO DEAR"[348]: DISABLED CHILDREN'S WRITING

In 1929, Boy Scout and sixth grader "in the cripple school," Casimir Koralewski, Jr., wrote a letter to the Toledo Rotary. He wanted to go back to camp, having attended the last summer thanks to Rotary support, but he needed funding to do so: "I can't see my way through as my parents can't possibly do it as they have a lot of doctor bills to pay for me."[349] Ed Kelsey (secretary of the Toledo Rotary as well as one of the ISCC's vice-presidents) forwarded the letter to Ray S. Loftus (chairman of the Toledo Rotary's Boys Work Committee) along with a note. Koralewski's attached letter, the note claimed, "explains itself." Kelsey pushed for the Rotary to fund Koralewski's passage to camp through the Boys Work Committee. "Ordinarily I think a boy should work to go to camp, or the money loaned him," Kelsey wrote, "but in the case of a crippled boy all of this is off."[350] If he had not known already, Koralewski must have shortly learned the power of his writing. By putting his desires and experiences on paper and sending them to the Rotary, he won something that he valued: an experience of leisure, community building, and citizenship education with a group of his peers. Despite Kelsey's implication that Koralewski would not have to work for his passage, in some ways the letter he authored was precisely that: an act of intellectual labor that earned him an experience he desired.[351]

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[348] Helen Miller, "The Round Robin," in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, January-February 1926, 11.

[349] Probably the Charles Feilbach school. Scout Casimir Koralewski Jr. to Ed Kelsey, May 14, 1929, Box 4, Folder 31, Toledo Rotary Club Records, 1912-2011, MSS-145, Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections, University of Toledo, Toledo, OH (hereafter cited as Toledo Rotary Club Records).

[350] Ed Kelsey to Ray Loftus, May 17, 1929, Box 4, Folder 31, Toledo Rotary Club Records.

[351] This genre of letter-writing was a common way for working class people to access aid from philanthropies and social welfare authorities. For other examples, see Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890 - 1935* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). See also the discussion of letters as social and cultural practice in Penny Summerfield, *Histories of the Self: Personal Narratives and Historical Practice* (New York: Routledge/Taylor and Francis Group, 2019), 28-31.

Children, like disabled adults, engaged in writing and speaking work that made claims for their citizenship and ability in ways that blended medical, philanthropic, and activist approaches. Writing, in the case of letters like Koralewski's, served as a form of labor; to write eloquently was to make oneself worthy of support. Students practiced these skills and learned their power through writing and editing practice fostered by institutional periodicals and sections of movement literature. Children's work appeared in the *Hospital School Journal* and *The Crippled Child* and in publications produced by disabled children themselves. This study is based on all available periodicals that regularly published crippled children's work during the 1910s-1930s.

Children's writing showcases a distinctive "crippled child culture" fostered by the movement—handed down by disabled adults, but continually re-created by children themselves. None of these source bases come to us unmediated—institutional magazines were likely created under supervision from staff, and topics suggested or reviewed by teachers or nurses; contributions to movement publications were selected by editors. Children's writing usually reflected core movement ideals, like education, intelligence, and worthiness. It also, however, revealed children's unique understanding of these goals. Adults tended to frame the worthiness of crippled children in terms of citizenship and the ability to contribute financially to a family or community. Children, in contrast, articulated their self-worth by pointing to the seriousness of their activities. They wrote solemnly of their pursuits, from classroom studies to extracurricular projects. Children's writing also reveals a less troubled relationship between the three sometimes-conflicting motivations of the movement: philanthropic ideals, medical and professional frameworks, and activist desires for social change. Whereas adult writings revealed the tension between these categories and the shifts of power between them over time, child-authored sources balanced each uncritically, perceiving them as part of a unified whole.

The unique positionality revealed by disabled children's writing also offers a fuller picture of the complexity with which the movement conceived of race and gender. Rather than being incorporated into daily routines, both adults and children of color were clearly unfamiliar and separate from the identities and experiences of these writers, appearing in both fiction and nonfiction as racial caricatures. These stereotypical and infrequent portrayals reveal the limits to the claims of adult leaders in the movement, who frequently touted their institutions' broad acceptance of children of any race. Children's writing also makes clear that these children generally expected futures of gender normativity. These child authors speak of gendered activities that primarily prepared boys for paid work and girls for domestic life, even as the adults of the movement grappled with conflicting arguments that girls and women with disabilities should prepare for domestic wifehood (as they would one day be cured) and for paid work (as they were unmarriageable). The writing of crippled children themselves offers revealing angles on these issues of identity and control, showing the distinct separation between the predominantly White children working on these magazines and people of color and between boys' and girls' occupational training.

I focus on a limited set of publications in this chapter, not because there were few texts created but adults have often regarded children's artistic and literary production as ephemera and insignificant. Few of these texts—even those that were published—have been preserved. Toledo's *The Echo* has only one extant issue—issue number 2, revealing that there was one lost issue that preceded it and an unknown number of potential issues thereafter. The Dowling School collection at the Minnesota Historical Society has preserved entire runs of the variously titled publications that children edited and authored from the late 1920s to the early 1950s. The more one seeks children's writing, the more one realizes how incomplete it is. Within the Dowling

School papers, one quickly finds evidence of other publications. “Busy Happy Times in Room 101,” a piece in *The Dowling News Reel* of December 1930, reported on the current activities of grades 1A and 2B. The children not only grew seeds and bulbs in their class garden; they also published a classroom newspaper, “The Big and Little World.” The paper had four sections, including one on the class garden and one on weather and outdoor happenings. Perhaps the most interesting were the other two sections: “Big World Happenings,” which distilled items of national and global interest from the radio and the rotogravure section of the local newspaper, and “Our Daily Affairs”— “the best part of all” which reported on what the children of room 101 did at home and school. In addition to their paper, the class had also created several books, including a photo book, “Just Ourselves,” featuring images of class members at home and school, and two creative endeavors collecting the children’s verse and stories.[352] In short, disabled children wrote constantly. The students believed themselves to be worthy subjects of news pieces, and they found value in reading and writing about themselves and one another. It is adults’ disinterest, not children’s, that has resulted in scarce source bases for disabled children’s history.

Fortunately, the sources available give a range of information. “Smiles,” a recurring section in *The Crippled Child*, offers breadth, giving snippets of detail and activity from a range of institutions across the country involved in the movement. One issue’s column listed the corresponding institutions for the 1924-25 school year: 27 hospitals and schools from eight states expected to participate. The column irregularly mentioned new additions from around the country in the years following, and by late 1926 “Smiles” editor Vivian Hackett (the lone adult in the mix) boasted that they were up to 51 schools, hospitals, and homes that were regular

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[352] 1A-2B, “Busy Happy Times in Room 101,” *Dowling News Reel,* December 1930. All Dowling student publications 116.I.1.7B, Dowling School Papers.

correspondents.[353] Conversely, the in-house periodicals offer depth, allowing a greater appreciation of the range of topics, types of writing, and activities conducted within these institutions and supporting the notions of connection and self-esteem only suggested by the shorter selections in "Smiles." The in-house work also offers a lower level of mediation between the writer and the reader and more space for the writers to fill. It thus promised a more candid set of ideas and details than the more circumscribed "Smiles" column with its multiple layers of adult involvement and broader, more diverse audience.

Children and Institutions

Much as chapter two asks readers to reconsider what we believe we know about the lives and activism of disabled adults in the 1920s and 30s, this chapter reframes how historians have considered disabled children's history, particularly regarding institutional spaces. Michael Rembis has argued that women and girls found ways to exercise power within eugenic institutional spaces; similarly, the children impacted by the crippled children's movement, from patients in its hospitals to students in its schools, took advantage of the skills and venues offered to make their own cultures and opportunities, study the things that interested them, and express their ideas. Rather than being merely patients or students, sequestered away from mainstream education and deprived of a voice, this study suggests that they had access to communication technologies, developing voice, their personal relationships, what they got out of their schooling and medical care (though not uniformly "good" or useful to them) and their access to and demand for education. Unlike the polio patient publications that have been examined by other scholars, in-house works at crippled children's institutions were child-led and full of content they

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[353] "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, October-November 1924, 11; for example, "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1925, 11; "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1926, 14.

authored and chose.[354] Furthermore, the children impacted by this movement do not only consist of those who were pupil-patients or formal students for long periods. Students changed status often, as these periodical sources reveal, with their recurring reports of who was at home, who was in the hospital or at a convalescent home, or away for a visit to warmer climes. Moreover, children who were not attendees still had a chance at becoming part of the community they fostered through the pages of the periodicals within which these children published.

The field of children's history suffers from a lack of direct available conventional sources, compounded by the generalized lack of belief in the credibility of children's narratives in the historical profession as a whole. This chapter takes on sources directly produced by children, and reads them with an eye toward being both critical of the mediate sources which carried them and treating them with the credibility that one might offer an equally resourced adult writer.[355] Analyses of historical children frequently emphasize their role as symbols: of a nation and its potential, or questions of societal decay or progress, or human nature and ideas about which attributes are innate versus environmental.[356] Similarly, childhood was symbolic for the adults in the crippled children's movement—both nondisabled adults, who often saw their charges as innocents or as the embodiment of human potential, and disabled adults, who saw themselves in the children they targeted for aid and education and frequently perceived the period as a critical one in their own lives. For the children themselves, however, childhood was simply the everyday life that they knew, and they wrote about childhood in that spirit.

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[354] Jacqueline Foertsch, "'Heads, You Win": Newsletters and Magazines of the Polio Nation," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2007); Naomi Rogers, "Polio Chronicles: Warm Springs and Disability Politics in the 1930s," *Asclepio; Archivo Iberoamericano De Historia De La Medicina Y Antropologia Medica* 61, no. 1 (2009): 143–74.

[355] This approach is in line with the methodological leanings of Geoffrey Reaume, *Remembrance of Patients Past: Patient Life at the Toronto Hospital for the Insane, 1870 – 1940* (Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[356] For example, Sealander, *Failed Century of the Child;* Ladd-Taylor, *Fixing the Poor*; Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*; Paula Fass, "The World Is at Our Door: Why Historians of Children and Childhood Should Open Up," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (2008): 1–31.

Children, as well as adults, accessed these pieces, even those in the mainstream movement periodicals. Children in schools and homes for disabled children heard the letters and stories of "Smiles" read aloud in classes, but there is also some evidence that they read *The Crippled Child* or *The Round Robin News* themselves. Russell C. Jordan, the corresponding secretary from Philadelphia's Kenderton school, commented that the audience at a recent holiday performance would have fit right into their pages: "You should have seen the faces of all the children, everyone with a smile. It would have been a fine picture for the SMILES page of THE CRIPPLED CHILD magazine."[357] Opal Wallace wrote to Vivian Hackett with her summer address in Lima, Ohio, saying, "I want to hear from some of the other children. The Crippled Child is a wonderful little magazine and I would not like to miss any of the numbers."[358] Other responses highlight the broader reach of these writings to people outside of affiliated institutions. An unnamed girl from a Massachusetts town "so small that she has a home teacher instead of a school for crippled children" expressed her appreciation for the stories of successful people with disabilities contained in *The Round Robin News*, saying, "it makes me feel that there must be some hope for me."[359] This sort of story appeared throughout the tenure of these movement periodicals, stretching back to the letters from Gertrude Schulze to the children of the Van Leuven Browne home addressed in chapter one. Children who did not attend the schools and convalescent homes associated with the movement still participated in the culture of disabled achievement and community created by it.

Even publications that have not survived motivated real action from the children who read and contributed to them, from community building to political participation. Alongside the

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[357] Letter from Russell C. Jordan to Round Robin, in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child,* March-April 1925, 11.
[358] Letter from Opal Wallace to Vivian Hackett, in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, July-August 1924, 12.
[359] "S-C-R-A-P-S," *The Crippled Child*, June 1935, 35.

Crippled Child and the *Hospital School Journal,* Joe Sullivan published a third magazine called *Real Courage*, which has not survived. The magazine marketed itself as an educational and community-building for children with disabilities, hoping to provide young people with "heart-to-heart depiction of success under difficulties."[360] One advertisement claimed a massive outpouring of interest among disabled children to receive the magazine, boasting a list of almost 4,700 children who wanted it (and could receive it with a subscription or support from the generous soul reading the *Hospital School Journal*).[361] Although it is unclear what precisely the publication contained or how many issues it produced, a 1925 article in the *Crippled Child* reported that the publication had inspired action among a group of young readers. Pupil-patients at Grand Rapids' Stocking Orthopedic School took its name for its organization, the Children's Courage Club; the club was also an orchestra and had as its motto "Never ask others to do what you can do yourself." The writeup also noted that "All are crippled in some way, and are pupils in the new public school conducted exclusively for handicapped children."[362]

Disabled Children's Writing in Movement Periodicals

Much as the early years of the *Van Leuven Browne Magazine* had set the stage for the prevalence of disabled voices, it also gave precedent for centering the stories and writings of disabled children. As chapter one discussed, children's writing appearing in the magazines served multiple goals: it was real-world writing and editing experience for the pupils, which could translate to later employment; it was a practice ground for formulating one's opinions and claiming one's citizenship; it served as proof of the successful work of the institution and the

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[360] *Real Courage* advertisement, *Hospital-School Journal,* January-February 1925, 2.
[361] *Real Courage* advertisement, *Hospital-School Journal,* January-February 1925, 2.
[362] Untitled inset, *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1925, 12.

deserving nature of the children that readers could hope to help. Children's writing continued to serve these goals in the *Hospital-School Journal* and *The Crippled Child,* although it became narrower in placement and focus by the 1930s.

Some children's work occupied the main pages of the two major periodicals, printed alongside other stories by the editor and other adult authors. This placement not only gave these pieces an equal place alongside the words of adult contributors; it also made these pieces function as evidence for the rights and capabilities expressed by adult authors. For example, a 1919 issue of the *Hospital School Journal* featured an evocative double spread. On the right-side page was a layout featuring the work of two pupil-patients at the Michigan Hospital-School (MHS). The top half showcased the artwork of Gale Joslin, a cartoonist now at home after a successful stay at the MHS. A reproduction of Alva Bunker's neat and legible handwriting and a brief story about how hands were not necessary to be able to write and create appeared at the bottom of that page. Both top and bottom sections included a photo of their authors, Bunker with a boat he had constructed and Joslin as a headshot. The overall effect evokes disabled creativity and talent. The facing page printed Joe Sullivan's "The Crippled Child's Rights." The consistency of the headshot with the other pieces contrasted with the small, dense text that differed from the large, loopy, image-focus of the opposite page. Furthermore, the right-hand display of talent backed up the assertions of Sullivan's article—that the crippled child had rights, would benefit from education and investment, and could parlay that into talent and achievement.

A more critical contrast appeared in a 1920 issue, when a 12-year-old boy rewrote a typical news item about a disabled child to focus it on his autonomy. Sullivan reprinted the version of Royce's story published in the *Detroit News*, then followed it with Royce's own version at his request. Royce rewrote the story after it appeared in the paper; Sullivan suggested "it might have been because Royce did not like just the way this reporter wrote about him."[363] Royce's changes suggest just what he disliked. His first change was his piece's origin point. The *Detroit News* journalist began Royce's story with his childhood before attending the MHS, emphasizing the incident of his disablement as a critical turning point. Royce began his telling with his arrival at the MHS. Likewise, the way each described Royce's body before medical intervention differed. The reporter noted that Royce's impairment "circumscribed…Royce to the limits of babyhood." Royce does not seem to have seen his pre-surgical state as infancy; he described his younger self as "crippled in bad shape" and noted merely that he "had gone on my hands and knees for nine years," without linking that method of movement to some sort of arrested development. Lastly, Royce emphasized the long process of the medical interventions he had endured, while the *Detroit News* writer made medical intervention seem magical and almost instantaneous. After his initial hip operation, Royce spent the next three months in a body cast, then more time in wedge casts, then had an operation on his ankle, another cast, then a brace, still another operation—this time for a knee—and finally the state he is in at the time of writing, "without a brace on either leg."[364] These differences, then, added up to this: Royce saw the beginning of the story not with his disablement but with the beginning of his new life at the hospital-school. He viewed his impairment as physical, emphasizing the ways it impacted his ways of moving through the world, but abandoned the metaphor of infancy, which suggests intellectual incapacity as well as physical limitation. Finally, by relating the minutia of his experiences with surgical and medical care from Dr. Blodgett, Royce showcased the extent of the process and the work and time put in by both the medical staff and Royce himself, who had

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[363] Joe F. Sullivan, "When Santa Visits Royce's Mother," *Hospital-School Journal*, 9 no 1, Nov-Dec 1920, 6.
[364] Sullivan, "When Santa Visits Royce's Mother," 6.

invested a good portion of his young life into this process. Medicine was not magic; it was part and parcel of the process of the hospital-school life, along with learning and speaking.

Royce was not alone in his appreciation of his time at the Hospital School and in particular the help of the doctors there. Many other children's letters emphasized the usefulness of their medical care and the education they received during their time at the MHS. The piece "As They Were and As They Are Now" contextualized before and after images of the children at the Michigan Hospital School (though many were in fact still in residence) with autobiographical narratives from their subjects, and almost all of them expressed similar sentiments. One even noted that "altho, I went [to school] seven years before I came here, I can assure anyone that I have benefited more from this one term, than during the most of the seven years."[365] Flora wrote her update from Olivet, Michigan, where she was attending college. Her letter is perhaps the most interesting—she expressed gratitude for being treated as a guest by a girls' Hall at her new school, lamented receiving only second prize in an oratorical competition, and reported that some special therapies were improving her walking. She also asked for a favor: help for another child she had met recently, a young polio survivor with a "badly crippled" right foot. His mother was trying to earn money to send him to the hospital at Ann Arbor by taking in laundry, but Flora was sure that Dr. Blodgett could help him. "I fear it will be a long time before she will have enough. The boy needs help right away. Would you please consider his case?"[366] Almost all of the letters reference Dr. Blodgett as the source of help and hope, though there are a few short letters printed addressed to Sullivan. These institutions served as a home for disability community building, but many children identified the medical attention offered as a key component of their success.

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[365] "As They Were and As They Are Now," *Hospital School Journal*, May-June 1919, 2.
[366] "As They Were and As They Are Now," 2.

The most consistent source of children's writing for the mainstream crippled children's movement was a recurring column near the end of most issues of *The Crippled Child*. "Smiles," eventually retitled "S-C-R-A-P-S," had been published in the magazine since 1923, almost since its inception.[367] As the twenties became the thirties, the *Hospital School Journal* ceased publication entirely, while *The Crippled Child* reinvented itself as a more professionally focused journal with fewer voices of disabled people in its pages. They still appeared but had become more of a curiosity, buried between medical and philanthropic articles by nondisabled writers rather than a guiding force of editorial direction.

"Smiles" and the institutional lives that it depicted offered the children the chance to play a variety of roles. Its very existence and its exhortations for letters, poems, and stories to fill the column, served as an argument for children to invest time in writing and sharing information with one another and with the adult stewards of the movement.[368] The column drew from letters written by disabled children circulated in a round-robin. One child, usually the corresponding secretary for her institution, would send a letter to the section's (adult) editor, detailing the current events and preoccupations of her school. Hackett would attach a list of the member institutions and their secretaries to the letter and mail it to the first institution on the list. Each secretary would read the letter, perhaps aloud in class with the teacher's permission, then send it on to the next person on the list. When the last school had read the letter, they sent it back to the editor, who kept it on file.[369] "Smiles" reprinted a selection of these letters. Eventually, these

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[367] For simplicity, I refer to the column as "Smiles" when talking about it generally, and cite the specific title used for discussions of specific examples.

[368] Sometimes this argument was particularly explicit, as when Edgar Allen noted the hundreds of letters he had received from crippled children already and encouraged them to send more to keep him apprised of "how things are going with you in your school." Edgar Allen, "Daddy Allen's Christmas Letter to the Boys and Girls of the Round Robin," in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1925, 11.

[369] For a time, the letters went through *The Crippled Child*'s editor, Vivian Hackett, then switched sometime in the early 1930s to Mabel Starrett. "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1925, 10.

letters were also collected and printed in a separate regular publication, the *Round Robin News*, though it is unclear when this began. Both the *Crippled Child* and the *Round Robin* circulated to various far-flung crippled children's institutions, spreading the letters' reach beyond the immediate writers and readers in the member institutions.[370]

Unsurprisingly, the letters published in *The Crippled Child* were often relentlessly cheerful, so it is not useful to use these as a measure of satisfaction with the institutions at hand. They do give a sense of what kinds of things the writers thought newsworthy or exciting for the other children on the list to read. Corresponding secretaries frequently included recent entertainments, describing picnics, summer camp stays, circuses, and parties. Philanthropic groups often facilitated these activities, particularly men's fraternal organizations that had taken an interest in crippled children's work: "The Elks entertained us Kiddies Day, the Rotarians of Athens, Pa., gave us a picnic and took us to a Chautauqua to hear the Swiss Yodlers."[371] Holidays were popular subjects of discussion, particularly Halloween, with its costumes and contests; Christmas, with presents and food; and Independence Day, with outdoor activities and games.[372] Some reported more mundane events; many, like Raymond Grubbs at Cincinnati's School for Crippled Children, gave daily schedules at school or camp.[373]

Even less pleasant matters had a positive sheen upon their telling. Elizabeth Petyko of Chicago's Fallon School reported that one pupil became ill during a picnic because "his cast was hurting him." An ambulance was summoned, and "they were very nice to us."[374] Agnes Carroll

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[370] No copies of the Round Robin seem to be in existence, but it is mentioned in other periodicals; for example, "Classes are Near 100% Subscription for 'Round Robin News,'" *Michigan's Crippled Children*, March 1935, 4.

[371] Louise Eves to Round Robin, September 14, 1925, in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1925, 11.

[372] For example, Eleanora Horstmann to Round Robin, November 4, 1924, *The Crippled Child,* January-February 1925, 10; Marguerite Bainter to Round Robin, January 17, 1924, *The Crippled Child*, November 1923, 12.

[373] Raymond Grubbs to Round Robin, May 7, 1929, in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, June 1929, 31.

[374] Elizabeth Petyko to Round Robin, September 17, 1925, in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1925, 11.

of Buffalo wrote that she "had an operation on [her] foot and it is much better now."[375] Altogether, these letters give a lighthearted picture of crippled childhood, in which children enjoyed access to a variety of exciting events and loving adults, make little mention of any unpleasantness, and put a high shine on duller details like medical procedures or daily life.

The column also featured literary contributions. The stories written by disabled children tended toward the sentimental, a literary mode that emphasizes emotion and morality over rationality and realism. Characters in sentimental works experience pain and elation, moral quandaries and sudden salvations; the ideal reader experiences these sympathetically along with the work's protagonists.[376] As Mary Klages argues in her work on blindness and sentiment in the US Victorian Era, both popular depictions of blindness and institutional reports from schools for the blind in the nineteenth century worked within the sentimental mode to showcase disabled people not just as images but as agents. Some works even had bases in biographical details of the lives of disabled celebrities, like Laura Bridgman and Helen Keller.[377] Likewise, as this section describes, crippled children's stories often centered children in precarious situations, not always physically disabled but often poor or ill, and put them in positions to make decisions about their conduct and take meaningful action.

The use of the sentimental mode proved highly compatible with the philanthropic techniques prized by a wide swath of the movement's nondisabled adults. Crippled children's

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[375] Agnes Carroll to Round Robin, September 19, 1925, in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1925, 11.

[376] Lisa Mendelman describes sentimentalism as "the literary mode whose conventions emphasize feeling—physical sensation and emotional intuition—as a source of knowledge, meaning, and interpersonal connection. Nineteenth-century sentimentalism typically links this sensibility to femininity, domesticity, intimate attachment, religious morality, and related values like sympathy, chastity, and self-sacrifice." She also notes the role of embodiment tropes in conveying these attributes, and contends that modern sentimentalism, the subject of her work, critique these conventions even as they employ them. Lisa Mendelman, "Feeling Hard-Boiled: Modern Sentimentalism and Frances Newman's 'The Hard-Boiled Virgin,'" *American Literary History* 26, no. 4 (2014): 698.

[377] Klages, *Woeful Afflictions.*

stories often evoked the images of the lovable child that were so central to philanthropic framings of the work. The vulnerability of their protagonists echoed that of their authors—or, perhaps more accurately, it echoed how adults around the authors talked about children. The moral framing of these stories also meshed well with the ideals the larger movement wanted to promote in both disabled children and nondisabled adult readers. The plucky children in these tales were often aided by a sympathetic adult, much as sympathetic adult readers might aid the authors by contributing to the ISCC and other efforts for crippled children. The moral framing of most stories' conflicts encouraged behaviors of honesty, generosity, and fortitude that philanthropic crippled children's advocates wanted to see from both disabled children and the nondisabled adults who might be reading. In short, then, these sentimental stories evoked images, attitudes, and behaviors that the movement worked to encourage in readers.

The main characters of Ruth Greenwald's prizewinning story "The Rose Bush" started their lives as the wealthiest people in their small Belgian town: a mother and her three children. When the Germans "tormented" the city during the Great War, the mother needed to hide their wealth quickly, and buried it under a rose bush to be retrieved later. The Germans failed to find the valuables, but the mother did not retrieve it or tell any of her children of the goods' location before she took ill and died months later. The youngest child also became ill, and because they could not afford a doctor, "the child was attended to by a kind neighbor, but it did not get the right care."[378] The young family struggled to avoid the poor house, but eventually, the boy decided it was the only option remaining. As they left the house, the boy decided to take the beautiful rose bush which had comforted him so often and discovered the money buried beneath it. The sister protested that they could not take the money as it did not belong to them. They took

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[378] Ruth Greenwald, "The Rose-Bush," in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, May-June 1926, 14.

the parcel to a friend who took out the contents, including a picture of the children and a note from their mother saying it belonged to them if anything were to happen to her. The issue of ownership cleared up, the story concluded neatly, with a doctor deeming the youngest child curable by "proper food and warm clothing" and all of them avoiding the poor house and living on "the proper foods and had everything they needed and lived wholesome happy lives."[379]

A similar story with a similar moral quandary appeared in 1928's contest. In "Little Peter's Task," Peter and Jeanne were orphaned siblings, their parents killed in the Great War. When the story opens, we learn that Jeanne fell down the stairs last year, breaking her back and ending her ability to walk and her trips to the park. While selling papers on a street corner to raise money to buy Jeanne a wheelchair, Peter saw a customer drop her purse. Tempted to use its substantial contents to purchase the needed chair, he remembered his dead mother's voice: "Honesty! Honesty! Nothing else pays!" Upon returning her purse, the woman asked his name and recognized him as the son of her "dearest girl friend when they both attended a convent in Paris." She instructed her chauffeur to take them to the children's tenement, and the story ended with the lasting promise of "a mother's care and love." More significant to Peter and the author, however, was the assurance that "he had overcome the first great temptation of his life."[380]

The sentimental themes present in these tales suggest that the children authoring them blended the philanthropic ideals of the movement with the self-direction of disabled activists. Disability, like poverty and illness, required the intervention of helpful, good adults who could see the humanity in all people. Compare this with the hundreds of calls to action, sentimental tales of children who received helping hands from family, friends, and neighbors, and political arguments for the role of the state in education and medical care of children. However, these

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[379] Ruth Greenwald, "The Rose-Bush," in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, May-June 1926, 14.
[380] Ruth Maginnis, "Little Peter's Task," in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, February 1928, 120.

kind people were plot devices, not protagonists; children took center stage in these stories, with significant moral decisions to make and lessons to learn.[381]

Creative work also illuminated what children found valuable or enjoyable about the work of the movement, most notably the Round Robin itself. A poetry contest resulted in two winning pieces, both of which described the Round Robin—an intriguing result, given that the contest rules offered four other possible topics on which to write, including "My School," "The Last Picnic," "Our Summer Camp," and "My Vacation."[382] Fifteen year old Ruth Greenwald of Valhalla, NY, who also authored "The Rose Bush," offered the following lines:

I think the Round Robin is a lovely thing,
Because of the happiness it may bring
In story form to some lass or lad,
The fun and joy someone has had.

The letters that we often get,
From boys and girls we have never met,
Take our thoughts away from sadness,
And like a miracle, change them to gladness.

And so I think our thanks must go,
To one sweet person we all know,
I'll just put her name in a bracket,
Three cheers for [Vivian Hackett].[383]

Toledo's Helen Miller, age eleven, was more succinct with her winning entry:

The Round Robin is heard from near and far,
It flies here and there to see how others are.
If you hear something going tweet, tweet, tweet
Kindly look up and you'll see a letter sweet.
The news is from children far and near.

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[381] An interesting exception to this appears in late 1927, in which a crook changes his criminal ways after meeting a starving boy. Fay Hedges, "A Gift of God," *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1927, 94-96. A blurb at the front of the issue praised this story as "an astonishingly fine product for a girl of fifteen," perhaps due in part to this choice of perspective. "Crippled Girl Wins Contest," *The Crippled Child*, November-December 1927, 74.

[382] "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1925, 11. One of the honorable mentions took on "My School," and the other was "My Vacation." "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, January-February 1926, 11.

[383] Ruth Greenwald, "The Round Robin," in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, January-February 1926, 11.

We like to hear of the letters so dear.[384]

Both of these poems emphasized the emotional role of the Round Robin: not just the joy of receiving letters, but the specific benefit of reading about another disabled child's joy. Moreover, these letters and the joy they brought facilitated a shared identity among the children who read them, disparate in age, impairment, and location; even though they tell of "boys and girls we have never met," their shared status as "crippled children" connected readers to writers. The letters served a critical purpose for the children who read and wrote them.

On occasion, contributors took up more serious topics in their pieces—issues like self-definition and death. One item in a June 1935 "S-C-R-A-P-S" column presented an alternate take on the word "cripple" to that proposed and used by adult leaders like Sullivan. It reprints an advice column letter to "Uncle Charley" in which Robert W.M. had a question about terminology. "Have you ever noticed that people speak of a blind *boy* or a deaf *boy*—but they usually say *a* cripple?" he asked. Troubled by this, Robert thought it gave short shrift to "our heads, our hearts, all the things about us that really matter" and wished to be thought of as a person first, then leave mentions of physicality either entirely or sideline them. Uncle Charley's response affirmed Robert's observation, saying, "I think you are right in feeling that it is evidence of a mistaken and unjust attitude." He then went a step further, suggesting that changing the minds of a society which did not see the distinction in these terms would "require years of courageous and often discouraging effort on the part of every Robin the world over," but that it was work that they could undertake and achieve much.[385] Children not only experienced the fruits of the movement; they also evidenced an attention to the social imports of language

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[384] Helen Miller, "The Round Robin," in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, January-February 1926, 11.

[385] This argument was in keeping with other rejections of the word cripple from writers like Lovewell and Hutton. "Scraps," *The Crippled Child*, June 1935, 35. Also see Lovewell, "Rubbing in Salt," 5; Hutton, "Don't Let People Think You Are 'Crippled,'" 5.

used about disability and an interest in relating their opinions on the matter and having them confirmed by an elder—in this case, Uncle Charley.

The crippled children of the movement saw themselves and their classmates as more than figures of pity, and this in borne out in the way they discussed death: as a time for a celebration of a child's achievements as well as merely a tragic event. "Smiles" writers also discussed death several times, and their manner in doing so is evocative of their investment in the worth of their own lives and work. Deaths frequently occurred among these groups of children; institutional reports suggested them and child-published newsletters reported them frequently. The May-June 1925 issue reported on the death of Howard Leedom, a pupil at the Gorman School for Crippled Children in Dayton, Ohio. An adult writing this piece may have been tempted to make this an unmitigated tragedy—the death of one so young, with so much ahead, and no time to accomplish anything during his short life, the only solace, perhaps, a comforting nod to life after death in heaven.[386] 14-year-old Leona Trottmann, however, emphasized the opportune time at which Leedom had passed on: "Just the day before he died he was made a Tenderfoot Scout in Troop No. 10. We rejoiced that he died, having had gratified his fondest wish. He was a willing worker and a helpful companion to all his classmates."[387] This was a bit more emotionally resonant than standard news reports on child death in major papers; however, it also avoided the maudlin treatment of child death which appeared in some news items.[388] They wished to remember their

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[386] For example, one contemporary obituary for a two-year-old girl in an Ohio paper, which included a verse: "The little voice we loved is hushed;/ We miss her everywhere;/ But beyond heaven's pearly gates/ She is calling to us there." "Obituary: Alice Allene Broadsword," *Medina Sentinel* (Medina, OH), February 11, 1921, 4.

[387] Letter from Leona Trottmann to Round Robin, February 20, 1925, in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, May-June 1925, 13. Leedom's death was also reported in "Boy Scouts: Wins in Last Great Race," *New York Times,* April 19, 1925, G11.

[388] For the former, see "Child Dies of Tetanus," *Indianapolis Star*, August 31, 1919; "Child Dies in Puddle," *Cincinnati Enquirer,* July 29, 1920, 11, 4. For the latter, see "Tiny Girl, Eldest of Four Children Dies From Burns," *Detroit Free Press*, September 29, 1922, which ends by informing the reader that one of the girl's young siblings "asks constantly, 'When is Rosie coming home?"

friend and classmate as someone who had lived a worthwhile life, both through the accomplishment of his main goal of becoming a Boy Scout and through his persistent positive presence in their lives. The seriousness and lack of pathos in this piece are evocative of one featured in *The Crippled Child* through a reprint from the Toledo Times. Myron Fisher, a student at Toledo's Charles Feilbach School for Crippled Children, bequeathed his entire savings—five dollars—as a legacy to his classmates "to make a happy Christmas for them."[389] Fisher used his knowledge of his impending death to become a benefactor, like the adults who surrounded him. Although death was certainly sad for both the children who knew it was coming to them and those left behind in the wake of the loss, both strove to remember and be remembered for their actions, not merely their symbolic value as tragic figures.

The children's work also showed the limitations of the movement's dealings with—or lack thereof—the racial and economic diversity of the nation as a whole and crippled children in particular. Many institutions limited admittance to one race (either only White children or, much more limited in number, homes specifically for "colored crippled children"), while others boasted their acceptance of any race or religion; activists and advocates largely ignored this divide in favor of collaboration between institutions.[390] Though it is impossible to trace the racial backgrounds of most of these contributors, genealogical and newspaper research and context clues point to overwhelmingly White writers; perhaps unsurprising, as the bulk of the contributors hailed from regions with mostly White populations, the central hubs of the movement.

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[389] See also "Crippled Children Inherit Tiny Estate—And Gratitude," *The Crippled Child*, January-February 1926, 4.

[390] Reeves discusses some of these distinctions in Reeves, *Care and Education of Crippled Children*, 106, and schools for disabled children of color are occasionally treated in *The Crippled Child* over the years, though always from a standpoint focused on the institution rather than its students. For example, James A. Scoot, "The Charles Henry Turner School for Physically Handicapped Colored Children," *The Crippled Child*, October 1933, 41-51.

To the predominantly White children of these institutions, people of color appeared as a novelty; children's writing from these sources evinced positive but deeply racialized imaginings of Black and Indigenous people both as peers and adults. For many of the contributors, African American adults were hypothetical or distant. One honorable mention in a "Smiles" story contest used the stock figure of a "colored man" to explain the difference between snow and cotton to a naïve boy just arrived from the North.[391] Others evince closer contact, like the children of an Ithaca home, who were treated to a film and then a live show: "After the picture, four 'dusky' musicians played for us and proved the talent of their race for jazz."[392] These caricatures confirmed racial ideas even as they served as benignly positive features in the writers' lives.

Likewise, children of color continued to play similar roles in children's letters as the character of Baby Neddy had for Blanche Van Leuven Browne's fiction: lovable, playful "picaninny" caricatures. Like the adults who created and sustained the movement, the predominantly White children authoring these texts imagined their Black classmates as adorable playthings. Eva Guise at the Children's Hospital Home in New Hartford, NY, wrote that Virginia Brown, a three-year-old "little colored girl," was one of the fifteen children in the home. "Everybody loves her," Guise continued, "she is our little pet."[393] Few images or texts suggest the presence of older Black children, who might have been more able to write their own stories, suggesting that there may have been no place for Black children who did not so easily conform to the "picaninny" caricature: racialized and sexually ambiguous cuteness, untamed silliness, and performativity of each for a White audience. Few and far between, Black children appeared as curiosities, not playmates or fellow authors, in disabled children's writing; in this, these writings

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[391] Donna Mae Hickey, "The Snow That Wouldn't Melt," in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, May-June 1926, 15.
[392] Alice Hodges to Round Robin, January 15, 1926, in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, March-April 1926, 11.
[393] Eva Guise to Round Robin, November 22, 1924, in "Smiles," *The Crippled Child*, January-February 1925, 10.

provide some of the clearest indications of the failures of the supposedly race-blind admissions bylaws at many of these institutions.

Perhaps one of the most useful parts of the periodical is not contained within it: the larger Round Robin exchange of letter and later publication. A piece from a state organization for disabled children reported that the “Round Robin News is Going to 7 Schools.” The details of the article suggest that kids received the publication under separate cover and probably in a much more complete form than is printed in “Smiles.” This publication did more than connect these children. It also encouraged them to take political action. The latest issue, the article notes, “urges the youngsters to write their congressman asking for their support of Bill S1634. This is the bill which will make provision for federal assistance in educating our handicapped children.”[394] Likely in reference to something adult (and former crippled child) Round Robin editor Mabel Starrett had authored, this intriguing tidbit makes it clear that “Smiles” does not offer us the whole story of the children’s letter exchanges and suggests a more political bent to the letter exchange than was generally reflected in that section. Children were encouraged to think of themselves as political actors, and likely encouraging one another to do the same.

The movement periodicals offered limited opportunities for children’s writing, but also promised a wider audience, and its mediated and surrounded nature often served to promote movement ideas more so than encouraging straightforward communication. However, evidence points to more flexibility and student-directed writing than one might immediately assume. Perhaps most significantly, the inclusion of these pieces in “Smiles” encouraged crippled children to write and audiences to read what they had to say about their own lives. Another type

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[394] “Round Robin News is Going to 7 Schools,” *Michigan’s Crippled Children*, April 1937, 4.

of publication allowed students with disabilities to take greater control over their words and express themselves more fully: the in-house periodical.

Seeing Echoes: Child-Edited Publications

Where the “Smiles” column offers the researcher and the contemporary reader a breadth of experience, the world of institutional periodicals offers depth. For this section, I look at two periodicals from two different institutions. These institutions represent two different approaches to the education of crippled children; one, an ISCC affiliated hospital-school, the other a public day-school; one initially funded by Rotary donors, the other initially funded by a disabled man’s legacy. One has only a single extant issue of its in-house publication, while the other boasts a range of issues archived in a state historical society.

As discussed in chapter 2, the Dowling School for Crippled Children began through the efforts of both disabled and nondisabled stakeholders. The *Dowling News Reel* started in late 1928. Although publication (and the name itself) fluctuated over the years, students never went more than a few years without some sort of student-edited periodical from this beginning until the last issues in the 1950s.[395] The *Dowling News Reel* reported on a day school primarily focused on education, and so the children’s pieces predominantly detailed classwork and extracurriculars.

The Echo, the publication authored by the children of the Toledo Home for Crippled Children, is a bit more limited. The only surviving issue of *The Echo* is its second, from

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[395] The paper at Dowling changed names several times over the course of its publication (or perhaps more accurately, there were several papers that stopped and started at Dowling), from the News Reel to the Searchlight in the mid-1930s to the Press and the Digest in the 1940s. For simplicity, I refer to the Dowling publication as the News Reel when speaking generally, and use the exact title when speaking of a specific issue or article.

December 1937.[396] The context for the publication was different too. The Toledo Home was a private hospital-school, not a public day school, so most patients resided there around the clock. The Toledo Home for Crippled Children grew from Toledo's branch of the International Society for Crippled Children, which like the ISCC as a whole had a strong link to the local Rotary Club. Rotary members established the Toledo Society in December of 1920 with the hope of eventually building an institution of some sort for the benefit of disabled children. However, the home did not come to fruition until 1930, as it took the Society nearly a decade to raise the funds needed. It was more medically focused, with medical staff in house, so *The Echo* features more information about medical care and the personal lives of doctors and nurses.

These periodicals had much in common with the children's writing in "Smiles" and other pieces in the movement periodicals. They served in part to show the children's education and achievements—it is hard to imagine that teachers and administrators never proffered it as evidence of their students' achievements. They capture limited moments in time at the institutions they describe and leave many questions unanswered about what was in lost issues and whether any other issues existed than those indicated by their archives. Likewise, we cannot assume that they come to us unmediated. *The Echo* was created under supervision from staff, perhaps even encouraged by staff as a rehabilitative project. Contents of both publications may have been suggested or reviewed by staff. However, the format and the increased space these texts offered—on average, the Dowling News Reel was 16 pages per issue— as well as the editorial control children exercised over these texts allows the reader to get a much better idea of how students spent their days, how much control they had over their educations, and most significantly, what motivated their writing.

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[396] This issue is labeled as the second; it is unclear whether issues beyond these two were created or whether the home ever had any other student-authored publications.

In-house periodicals suggest the overwhelming Whiteness of many of these spaces and how children learned about race and racial difference within them. Visits were a frequent source of learning and excitement at schools and homes associated with the movement, as performers or professionals came to visit the children and teach them something new. Hotan Tonka, "a Chippewa Indian chief," visited in February of 1930, singing songs, telling myths, and dancing "the war dance which is very different from what we thought it was."[397] In reality, Hotan Tonka was playing Indian himself, a White Boy Scouts executive from Naperville, Illinois named Jack Rohr. Armed with a dubious "adopted as white son of the chief" story and an interest in Native traditions, Rohr "turned his hobby into a career."[398]Although Rohr's faux-indigeneity was probably available knowledge, the children perceived him as a real representative of Chippewa life and practice. The limited supply of Toledo's *The Echo* is additionally frustrating because it is clear from photos of the Toledo home and its pupil-patients from 1938 to the 1950s that it was an integrated space.[399] However, the single issue of *The Echo* offers no reflection on these topics, and the dearth of information on the contributors does not allow for much analysis of the representation of writers of color in its pages.

For students, these periodicals served as a source of connection, offering updates on what former patients are up to and giving closure in cases of departure or death. Both the *News Reel* and *The Echo* featured sections reporting newcomers to and departures from the institution. The first extant issue of the Dowling News Reel, for example, gave an obituary for Simon Cronick and William Niesen, two fifth graders who had died since the previous issue. It ends, "They were

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[397] D.T., "Hotan Tonka," *The Dowling News Reel*, May 1930, n.p. Dowling School Papers.
[398] "Wind in the Pines," *Stand By*, April 25, 1936, 9.
[399] Photos, Box 1, Folder 1, Ability Center of Toledo Records, MSS-190, University of Toledo, Toledo, OH (hereafter cited as Ability Center of Toledo Records).

both good workers and enjoyable class-mates."[400] Such a feature would let readers know what had happened in a formal and adult manner; they would not have to worry about the fate of these boys going unstated. H.W. in 5A authored the piece—not a usual editor, so it is possible this writer volunteered or was tapped for the job because of some friendship with or connection to the deceased. These issues also included sick and absent lists, showing who was in which local hospital (when the February 1929 issue was published, their editor resided at the closest Shriners Hospital), who was at home, and who had been transferred back to their mainstream schools.[401] Dowling students corresponded with children on these lists: "Some of us wrote letters to those who had been away a long time," remarked one. "We were happy when they all returned."[402] The writers of this periodical also elicited participation from their peers. In a report on various magazines Dowling received and how students could borrow them, the author encouraged readers to report the various uses they found for the magazines. "We would like to hear about these in our magazine space some time. Will it be you who will tell us what you've made or read next time?"[403] The newsletter served as a point of connection in a childhood that was, at times, unpredictable, with people moving into and out of school, encouraging communication between disabled children and participation in a shared activity.

These magazines also fostered the interest in other homes suggested by the letter in "Smiles." Whereas the Round Robin letters tended to provide recent updates about events and classwork, *The Echo* offered an encyclopedic view of other crippled children's homes and schools. Such was the case in an article about the Gates Hospital in Elyria, which was one of the

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[400] H.W., "In Memory of Simon Cronick and William Niesen," *Dowling News Reel*, Feb. 1929, n.p. Dowling School Papers.

[401] *Dowling News Reel*, Feb. 1929. Dowling School Papers.

[402] Untitled column, *Dowling News Reel,* December 1930. Dowling School Papers.

[403] "Magazine News," *Dowling Searchlight*, February 1937, 1. Dowling School Papers.

cornerstone institutions of the movement associated with the Edgar Allen origin myth as well as a relatively close neighbor of the Toledo school. The editor's note at the end of the piece informed the reader that it was "the second in the present series of articles about other Convalescent Homes."[404] The article itself used the sort of top-down description one might expect from a more formal source, noting Edgar Allen's role in founding the hospital, the capacity and the current number of patients (fifty and twenty-seven, respectively; ages of current patients ranged from infancy to eighteen years), and the medical and therapeutic equipment available. It also described the school within the hospital, which was headed by local and state boards of education and staffed by one teacher, Miss Caroline Foley. It was only at the end that the children of the school became critical actors; the author noted that "The children do some handicraft work besides going to school. They have entertainments too."[405]

These publications also offer the chance to understand how disabled children within these schools and homes understood and integrated the tenets of the movement into their worldviews. While adults' writing evinced tension between the various priorities of philanthropic, medical/professional, and activist approaches to the work, children more often saw them as complementary parts of a whole. The treatment of medical themes within these sources, for example, suggests that children saw them as critical providers of their care. A poem entitled "Our Doctors" lauds each doctor for his specific achievements and concludes with the stanza:

> I'll chant their praise for years to come,
> Of my trust in them I'll tell,
> For with our God in Heaven's help

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[404] "Gates Hospital in Elyria," *The Echo*, December 1937, Folder 22, Box 4, 2. Ability Center of Toledo Records. Unlike the Dowling publications, *The Echo* did not individually attribute most of its pieces even to initials, only listing its contributors at the beginning with titles like "Features," Departments," and "Entertainment." This makes it difficult to determine who authored which piece. "Staff," *The Echo*, December 1937, Box 4, Folder 22, 2. Ability Center of Toledo Records.

[405] "Gates Hospital in Elyria," *The Echo*, December 1937, Box 4, Folder 22, 2. Ability Center of Toledo Records.

They'll surely make us well.[406]

The poet voiced in these lines a collective belief in the possibility of cure through medical means. One could infer from this that they fully expected to be made able-bodied by the doctors and their medical gadgets and methodologies, but other sources suggest a more reciprocal relationship, like the one portrayed by Royce in the *Hospital School Journal* mentioned above. A report of physical therapy efforts in the same issue of *The Echo* suggested that the labor of getting well did not just belong to the doctor; it also belonged to the patient. Those who found success at walking were named in this column and praised for "learning all over again what fun it is to walk."[407] While the piece did not chastise anyone for not conforming, this sort of public praise (and, among such a relatively small population, surely some absences from this column speak volumes) served as a way for students to police themselves, encouraging one another to conform to both the belief in cure and the participation in medical efforts to attain it.

It was perhaps this confidence in cure that informed pupil-patients' imaginings about their futures and suggests that their definitions of cure may have been more literal and more focused on changing the body than those of many movement adults. The text subtly hints at an expectation of future marriage, despite the conflicted narratives surrounding disabled people and marriage explored in the previous chapter. An account of the marriage of a nurse at the Convalescent Home is juxtaposed with the workshop reports. The reporter notes that "after the ceremony, Mr. & Mrs. Kevill came to the Convalescent Home and showed the children how they looked in their wedding clothes. We more than enjoyed the wedding cake Miss Boes had made for us."[408] This indirect involvement of the Home's children in the ceremony of the Kevills'

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[406] "Our Doctors," *The Echo*, December 1937, Box 4, Folder 22, 1. Ability Center of Toledo Records.
[407] "Physical Therapy," *The Echo*, December 1937, Box 4, Folder 22, 3. Ability Center of Toledo Records.
[408] "Nurse Weds on Thanksgiving Day," *The Echo*, December 1937, Box 4, Folder 22, 4. Ability Center of Toledo Records.

marriage suggests the maintenance of a normative, homelike atmosphere—if the home is truly a home, and nurses and staff part of the Home's family, then participation in family rituals is par for the course, though within limits (the children did not attend the ceremony itself). It also seems to serve as something that is potentially aspirational for the children. By showing the children of the Home their wedding clothes and providing them with wedding cake, the Kevills and the rest of the staff prepare the children for what to expect from their own eventual wedding ceremony.

The Echo also reveals the gender-specificity of occupational and pre-vocational activities, and that many pupil-patients wholeheartedly accepted the gendered activities and futures anticipated for them. The future men and future women in the home not only undertook different projects but also reported on them in vastly different language. Reports on the Boy's Workshop (sic) have them making trucks, while the Girl's Workshop (sic) participants occupy themselves with wearable accessories. However, the separation goes beyond just items—the way in which the two pieces describe their participants and activities also suggests divergent expectations for the lives their participants would later pursue. The paper reports that for the boys, "out at the workshop things are pretty busy during the month of December," a businesslike summation focusing on the very businesslike unit of "the month," and the professional language of being "busy."[409] One of the boys mentioned is "our architect."[410] At the Girl's Workshop, by contrast, "Everything is in an uproar for Christmas."[411] Lest we think that perhaps the articles the girls make are for some enterprise, the magazine tells us that these items "will make nice presents for Dad and Mother."[412] While the Boy's Workshop emphasized language of vocational preparation,

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[409] "Boy's Workshop," *The Echo*, December 1937, Box 4, Folder 22, 4. Ability Center of Toledo Records.
[410] "Boy's Workshop," 4.
[411] "Girl's Workshop," *The Echo*, December 1937, Box 4, Folder 22, 4. Ability Center of Toledo Records.
[412] "Girl's Workshop," 4.

regimentation, and business in anticipation of future employment, the Girl's Workshop presented their work as generative but decidedly domestic, preparation for a future at home.

Child-edited texts also offered a space for occasional subversion of expectations surrounding moral lessons or sentimentality. "The Exciting Adventures of Twinkletoes," a child-authored Christmas story about an elf who breaks the rules by dressing up as Santa, goes awry of any potential moral that one might expect with such a story. Rather than repentance, confession, or even punishment, Twinkletoes goes to his brother and agrees to a deceptive plan to avoid punishment: he steals a reindeer and then "finds" and returns it, knowing that Santa will be so grateful that he will not punish him for his transgression. The plan goes off without a hitch—Santa does pardon Twinkletoes and fails to catch on to the fact that he is being manipulated.[413] Thus, although there were undoubtedly more traditional, moralizing narratives available, in-house periodicals provided the opportunity to imagine beyond the rigid border of a morally edifying tale and experiment with the wish-fulfillment fantasy of many a child—getting away with breaking the rules.

Students claimed agency over their education. Rather than explaining to the world why education benefited crippled children, they simply showed their ability to inquire, create, and learn through their stories about school, which not only illustrated how students spent their days but revealed the control that students had over these activities. In "Why We Studied Trees," Jeanne Boehlke reported that a classmate's trip to the northern part of the state piqued the interest of Dowling's 4B class's interest. When the boy brought branches from trees local to that part of Minnesota to show the class, the students decided they would like to know more about trees. First, they mounted the branches Edward had brought and learned their names; then they

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[413] Helen Hart, "The Exciting Adventures of Twinkletoes," *Dowling Searchlight*, December 1936, 1. Dowling School Papers.

compared them to the trees that grew around the school. They learned about the life cycle of a tree, their parts and their rings, and finally, crucially, converted these into written knowledge: "We drew pictures of our trees and made a book with our trees, stories, pictures, and poems."[414] In another instance, a Dowling class took a planned activity and expanded it into a money-making enterprise. After reading the Tale of Peter Rabbit and drawing pictures of the characters, the students put the pictures in a row. Woodrow, one student in room 101, noted that the drawings now resembled a picture show. He suggested that they make them into a moving picture show, and the other students agreed, recruiting two boys from another room to help make a moving picture machine out of some orange boxes and a couple of poles. The children pasted the pictures they had drawn on paper rolled on the poles at each end, and the service of a couple of operators to roll the pictures past transformed it into a low-tech animated show. They then selected Woodrow Morgan and Betty Umstead to play Peter and Mrs. Rabbit, Marie Smith to play Mr. McGregor (each of whose performances the article praised), and several other girls in the class to play other bunnies and birds. The enterprise even had a business manager, Harry Davis, who oversaw the printing, conducted the sale of tickets to the show, and served as the doorman once the production was underway. Their efforts garnered three dollars and five cents from their "nice and well behaved" patrons, which they planned to put toward the purchase of a fernery for the classroom.[415] Students often determined what they were going to study as a class, designed projects that would inform, motivate, or put that study into practice, and reported the outcomes in their own words, within their own publication.

Ultimately, the children at Dowling used these texts to make an argument for the significance of their ideas and their lives. Though there were undoubtedly lighthearted elements

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[414] Jeanne Boehlke, "Why We Studied Trees," *Dowling News Reel,* December 1930. Dowling School Papers.

[415] Room 101, "The Tale of Peter Rabbit," *Dowling News Reel*, May 1930. Dowling School Papers.

of these periodicals, the tone of a majority of each issue was serious news reportage—even if the content was daily classroom routines or special entertainments. Writers for these magazines took themselves and their classmates seriously and promoted an image of crippled children as educated and well-informed. The makeshift moving picture show created by Room 101, for example, was a matter of the utmost seriousness. One "onlooker" to a president's day program in Room 103 began their story with an admission: "As I stepped into Room 103 I had a very embarrassing experience. Instead of being greeted by smiles, I received meaningful glances signifying me to be quiet." The story, authored by Margaret Montague and Helen Hay, seemed a review of the program from the perspective of a (slightly late) attendee. A close reading reveals that the two authors also appear as attendees of the program separate from the authorial voice. Thus, the piece is likely a creative imagining of what an external, composite attendee might encounter were they to attend the show; the way these authors chose to present the show focused on how the audience demanded quiet attention and professionalism from other attendees, which emphasized the importance of the proceedings.[416]

Students positioned themselves as experts in their interests and experiences and articulated why their activities were not only entertaining but beneficial to children with disabilities. One could instructively compare two stories of radio, one adult-authored and the other child-authored. A piece in the adult-authored, local movement newspaper *Michigan's Crippled Children* quoted Billy, a "patient little sufferer" of arthritis whose "only desire was to possess a radio."[417] He appealed to the reader, saying, "If I had a radio, I am sure I would hardly have time to notice the pains." [418] Billy's longing for a radio was part of a larger trend of

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[416] Margaret Montague and Helen Hay, "The Onlooker's View of the Program in Room 103," *Dowling News Reel*, March 1931. Dowling School Papers.
[417] "Crippled Boy, 11, Thanks Society for Providing Radio," *Michigan's Crippled Children*, September 1935, 4.
[418] "Crippled Boy, 11, Thanks Society for Providing Radio," 4.

children with disabilities enjoying radio for its entertainment, educational, and socializing benefits; the article presented him as in need of a radio in order to listen to it and benefit from it. This treatment contrasts with a later event a few states away. Disabled child Martin Croze appeared on a Minnesota radio program in October 1936 to speak about the importance of radio for disabled children. A *Dowling Searchlight* article reported that his "talk was very interesting and entertaining because of the clear explanations given by Martin, especially those pertaining to his methods of obtaining and building the different sets."[419] He also described methods that he and a friend used to communicate across distances, first using blinking lights and later telegraphy. Thus, these sources allow us to see another side of these children—they did not just "desire" radios to while away their sickroom hours; they *promoted the concept* of radios for disabled children as both a tool to access the outside world and an engineering project to hone their minds and skills.

In part, the seriousness of the children in these periodicals drew from their belief that their activities were "work," in the same sense as the progressive reformers who surrounded them defined work.[420] Marilyn Engdahl wrote that although she was no longer in the stamp club, she had collected about 100 stamps and "I still do my work at home."[421] She considered stamp collecting "her work," an activity of collection and classification she undertook with deliberation and diligence, and continued to devote time to the task even after her formal membership in the club had ended (for reasons unspecified). Likewise, in *The Echo*'s report of a pupil who had left the Convalescent Home to go back to his own home in Arlington, OH, the author not only

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[419] "A Radio Flash," *Dowling Searchlight*, November 1936, 2. Dowling School Papers.

[420] For example, as Browne understood it, tasks done in service of a large and important goal. See Blanche Van Leuven Browne, Ridgefield Notes, No. 1. November 5, 1918, Box 1, Folder 4, Browne Papers. For a similar use of work, see Mary Ritter Beard, Woman's Work in Municipalities (New York: D. Appleton, 1915).

[421] Marilyn Engdahl, "Stamp Club," *Dowling Searchlight*, February 1937, 1. Dowling School Papers.

mentioned the subject's interest in "drawing and college work," but also expressed "hope he may continue with his work while he is at home."[422] The work that disabled children did—whether schoolwork, hobbies, or artistic expression—was critical not only to the children who practiced it but to the others around them.

Looking Outside: Two Graduates of the Dowling School

The adults who guided the crippled children's movement were a self-selected set—those who had either done well enough to think about the lives of others who came after them, or those who regretted that their lives had been circumscribed and wished to change the situation for future disabled children. But were their ideas genuinely successful in making such changes? What outcomes awaited the crippled children attached to the movement once they reached adulthood?

The sources discussed so far painted a rosy picture of disabled children's lives after education and medical treatment. However, there was clearly a wider range of experiences available for children who grew up after receiving these services. Many of the success stories (perhaps in large part because of the youth of the movement itself) speak of their students in school, set for a future career, but infrequently discuss graduates who have actually become employed, especially any employed outside of the movement's institutions and efforts. Alva Bunker and Mathilda Saylor, both success stories discussed in chapter two, appeared in celebratory articles even as they were still safely ensconced within schools or hospital-schools. The achievement of being at a school was the measure that the young person had found success. However, this variety of story tells nothing of their situation afterward, about the person's

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[422] "Patient Goes Home," *The Echo*, December 1937, Box 4, Folder 22, 4. Ability Center of Toledo Records.

success at finding employment or starting a family—in short, it does not offer many arguments about the person's life in the long term after their education had concluded. The most striking success stories were about people who became wealthy and successful before the movement even began; the movement itself had few finished stories of achievement to tell.

Ironically, even as the movement gained in awareness and popularity, the growing standardization of workplaces due to similarly Progressivist principles (in the sense that science and planning could positively impact the world) worked in direct opposition to any social gains. Large patches of American society may have become interested in the idea of educating the disabled child for future citizenship and employment. However, efficiency experts still carried the day in organizing many workplaces, where small differences in motor function or approach to a physical task purported to result in considerable losses in productivity for a factory or office as a whole. Scientific management approaches like Taylorism or motion study looked at every small movement of a productive worker and streamlined it all toward maximum efficiency; the nonstandard movements of disabled workers often differed from these routinized patterns. Ideas of disability in the broader national sphere shifted accordingly, raising questions about whether people with physical impairment, injury, or bodily difference to participate in a workplace, even as rehabilitation advocates attempted to argue for the benefits of scientific management approaches for disabled workers.[423] It is little wonder that new genres of employment articles cropped up in the 1930s, encouraging employers to hire disabled workers or discussing specific strategies for vocational training and outreach programs.[424] Advocates and activists realized that

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[423] Elspeth Brown, "The Prosthetics of Management: Motion Study, Photography, and the Industrialized Body in World War I America," in *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives: Modern Histories of Prosthetics*, ed. Katherine Ott, David Serlin, and Stephen Mihm (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 249–81; Rose, *No Right to Be Idle.*

[424] For example, Reinette Lovewell Donnelly, "Their Jobs Depend on It," *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1938, 89-91.

ample vocational preparation for the thousands of disabled children they served would have little impact if employers were unwilling to hire disabled workers.

The post-school careers of two Dowling School graduates suggest both the potential for crippled children to become successful disabled citizens and the obstacles, particularly class and gender, which confronted them in their attempts to do so. Martin Croze was the very picture of success at Dowling. Before his radio appearance mentioned above, the fifteen-year-old had been selected to welcome Franklin Delano Roosevelt on the children's behalf when the president visited Dowling.[425] Roosevelt was perhaps the major celebrity of disability work in the 1930s and 40s, known for his adult acquisition of polio in 1921 and his lifelong investment in polio treatment shortly thereafter.[426] Croze likely felt the appointment was an honor; nonetheless, he had his own political convictions. He welcomed the president with a speech while wearing, on the back of his lapel, a button supporting Roosevelt's opponent.[427]

Croze's interests and activities while at Dowling defined the course of his life. After Dowling, he went on to the University of Minnesota, where he won a $600 scholarship from the Radio Corporation of America and became president of Kappa Eta Kappa, an electrical engineering fraternity with an active radio club. He finished his Bachelor of Electrical Engineering in 1947 and his Masters in the same in 1952.[428] He became an engineer working on

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[425] Room 103, "The President's Visit," *Dowling Searchlight,* November 1936, 1. Dowling School Papers.
[426] Hugh Gregory Gallagher, *FDR's Splendid Deception* (Arlington, VA: Vandamere Press, 1999); Naomi Rogers, "Race and the Politics of Polio: Warm Springs, Tuskegee, and the March of Dimes," *American Journal of Public Health* 97, no. 5 (May 2007): 784–95; David Kammer, "'A Matter Very Close to My Heart': Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Tingleys, and the Creation of the Carrie Tingley Hospital for Crippled Children," *New Mexico Historical Review* 85, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 39–60.
[427] Iric Nathanson, "A Presidential Campaign Stop in '36: FDR Comes to Minnesota," *MinnPost* (Minneapolis, MN), October 7, 2016, https://www.minnpost.com/politics-policy/2016/10/presidential-campaign-stop-36-fdr-comes-minnesota/.
[428] "Wins Scholarship," *Minneapolis Star-Journal*, October 19 1945; University of Minnesota, *Gopher 1947 Yearbook* (Minneapolis, MN: Graduating Class of 1945, 1945).

a variety of projects, from photo to X-ray processing devices.[429] Croze married in August 1953 and had two children. As an adult, he supported crippled children's work, helping to organize benefit dinners for Dowling; when he died in 2001, his obituary requested donations to the Courage Center, an organization that had begun its life as the Minnesota Society for Crippled Children and Adults.[430] Croze achieved all of the landmarks of a successful former crippled child: marriage, employment, and transition from philanthropized to philanthropist.

Other local records suggest less favorable results for the children of these homes and schools. Not only were graduates not uniformly successful, but their lack of success could be read as a lack of capability. The Family Welfare Association of Minneapolis began intensive contact with former Dowling School attendee Mrs. Sarah Smallwood, "a small slight woman and very nervous," in 1937.[431] She had met Mr. Ralph Smallwood a decade before, through his brother Bernard Smallwood, a fellow student at Dowling School and polio survivor, and her steady date. While on a double date with Bernard, his brother, and another girl, she and the other girl decided to switch dates, and within six weeks, Sarah had married Ralph.[432] Sarah left Dowling in sixth grade to attend a vocational school for bookbinding but disliked the work.[433] When social workers inquired into her past as part of their standard investigations into aid recipients, they found that teachers remembered her as a subpar student.

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[429] "Post as Precision Inc," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, June 20, 1960, 25; "Engineer Joins Pako," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, July 31, 1961, 12B.

[430] "Dinner Set for Handicapped," *Minneapolis Star,* February 8, 1960, 11B; Obituary of Martin Croze, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 26, 2001, B8.

[431] All client names in the records from the Minnesota Social Welfare History Archive are pseudonyms to protect their privacy, as per collection restrictions. Referral form from Department of Public Relief to Family Welfare Association, December 3, 1936, Case folder 26754, Box 18, Minneapolis Family and Children's Service Records, SW0075, University of Minnesota, Minnesota Social Welfare History Archive, Minneapolis, MN (hereafter cited as Minneapolis Family and Children's Service Records.

[432] Entry, April 11, 1928, Case notes, 1928-1939, Case folder 26754, Box 18, Minneapolis Family and Children's Service Records.

[433] Closing Evaluation for MLF#26754.

Family and Children’s Services and Sarah Smallwood articulated different reasons for her difficulties. For Mrs. Smallwood, her physical disability was a central factor in her lack of success, as was her unpleasant marriage and her lack of training and opportunity for recreation—in short, social and physical factors that were outside of her control. Caseworkers saw her problems as primarily emotional and intellectual, saying that she “possesses an emotional instability which together with her dull normal mentality (I.Q. 84) and her physical deformity, prevents her from finding satisfactory and useful placement in society."[434] This formulation of her issues was convenient for explaining the agency’s inability to improve Mrs. Smallwood’s situation; stubbornness and emotional troubles would circumvent even the best rehabilitative efforts. These reasons translated into contrasting ideas about what strategies would most benefit Mrs. Smallwood. Mrs. Smallwood claimed emotional and regenerative activities and relationships as necessary and as things she had a right to experience—a happy marriage, in which she could occupy an appropriately gendered role, and the ability to truly relax. Caseworkers did not perceive these as rights that she deserved. They also noted that “relief has not always been carefully given; for example, Mrs. Smallwood realizes that a request for stockings which she wears out quickly because of her brace, will always be met. She probably has masked other needs under this request. Mrs. Smallwood is at times inclined to be demanding and to feel that as long as her requests are moderate, she is entitled to receive support without any obligation on her part to try to become independent."[435] Becoming independent, naturally, is what able-bodied women were being discouraged from doing; for Mrs. Smallwood, however,

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[434] Closing Evaluation for MLF#26754.
[435] Closing Evaluation for MLF#26754.

welfare workers believed that supporting her family independently through paid work was preferable because of her disability.[436]

As a whole, the first generation of crippled children turned adults did not seem to inspire a significant arousal of similar spirits in the children aided by the movement. The second generation of crippled children grew into adults without joining with the International Society, at least not in a formal capacity. In 1936 Mabel Starrett pointed out the discrepancy of involvement in the ISCC between disabled and nondisabled adults as evidenced by the organization's directory: "Out of those 270 fine men and women, who have done their part in bringing the International to its present status, there were only five… Five out of two hundred and seventy! A rather small percentage."[437] Many, like Mrs. Smallwood, may not have had the financial means to provide much support to the cause, as despite the work of the movement to promote employing workers with disabilities, many employers still resisted hiring them.[438] Starrett attributed the absence of disabled folks in the movement to a variety of factors—the belief that, if this were a Christian endeavor to provide charity, it would be unseemly for nondisabled helpers to draw in the labors of those who they should be aiding; the fact that disabled adults were often in two groups—those who were so impaired that they preferred to associate only with other confined to their homes or beds, and those who had recovered and thrived so much that they wished to dissociate themselves from any efforts or markings connected to disability. Starrett was not content with this state of affairs, nor did she conclude it was universally the case;

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[436] For maternalist expectations for nondisabled women who were clients of welfare officials, see Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled*; Gwendolyn Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917 - 1942* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

[437] Mabel Starrett, "Placing the Physically Handicapped in the Ranks," *The Crippled Child*, August 1936, 1, https://dhm.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=684&page=all. The "Grown Up Tims" phrase was her way of referencing the ISCC's slogan at the time, "Forward throughout the World" for six million Tiny Tims," which was in turn a reference to Dickens' disabled child character is *A Christmas Carol.*

[438] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*, 144-46, 164-65.

the rest of her article highlighted groups that were partaking in some form of disabled community building or crippled children's work, and called for more investment in encouraging such efforts: "We need to arouse within our schools for cripples for crippled children and within the adult, both of the independent class and the shut-in, the great need for giving their interest, their enthusiasm and their talents, marching shoulder to shoulder with the International and other organizations, 'Forward Throughout the World.'"[439]

Conclusion

The children of the "crippled children's movement" had much in common with their adult predecessors who promoted the movement. They used their ability to communicate their ideas and experiences to lay claim to an identity that emphasized their capacity and their worth. They narrated their experiences in the personal but unemotional manner characteristic of disabled adult contributors. And they were articulate and compelling advocates for their own interests. However, they also interpreted their experiences differently than the disabled adult writers of the last chapter might have found reasonable. For one, they tended to see the three strands of the movement as far more unified than the adults treated them in their writing. This is perhaps part of why these children were more likely to articulate their identities as "just the same" as nondisabled children than "better and harder working," as Sullivan and others had billed them. Ironically, although these homes, schools, and periodical-based connections offered the promise of building a disabled community, they instead served as connective tissue for a "soon-to-be-nondisabled" community.

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[439] Mabel Starrett, "Placing the Physically Handicapped in the Ranks,"1.

This state of affairs only became more characteristic of work for crippled children as the 1930s became the 1940s. In the final chapter of this dissertation, we will turn to the changes wrought in the landscape of crippled children's work by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, better known as the March of Dimes.

CHAPTER 4: "YOU SIMPLY CAN'T QUOTE A FOUR-YEAR-OLD BOY"[440]: CHANGING CHILDHOOD DISABILITY

In August 1936, Mabel Starrett publicly pondered the slogan of the International Society for Crippled Children in the pages of *The Crippled Child*. "Forward throughout the world for six million Tiny Tims" was a statement which had the power to move people from all walks of life, she argued, forcing them to imagine the disabled children of the world as millions of lovable, pure-hearted Dickens characters. But what about disabled adults, the "grown-up crippled children, known as the physically handicapped?"[441] Starrett made a study of the delegates of the ISCC for 1935, finding only five out of the 270 listed to be "grown-up Tims."[442] Why, she wondered, were so few disabled people represented in the organization's leadership?

Disabled voices in childhood disability work as a whole declined in the mid-twentieth century due to two major changes in the function and structure of the US crippled children's movement. The first is the shift in the organization that had fostered disabled activism, as the ISCC slowly became Easter Seals. The second is the contemporaneous decline of this organization from public spotlight in favor of the more glamourous and more focused NFIP, soon renamed the March of Dimes.[443] Both organizations eschewed the media strategies of earlier disabled activists, who had carefully controlled the images of disabled children they put forward; instead, they centered images of disabled children for fundraising effectiveness while cutting off the avenues of expression and influence that earlier disabled adults and children in the movement had once enjoyed.

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[440] Memo from C. David Ohman, Jr. to Dorothy Ducas and Don St John, June 26, 1953, re. Biography of 1954 Poster Child, Delbert (Debby) Dains, 1954, Box 7, Fund Raising Records, March of Dimes Archives, Mamaroneck, NY (hereafter cited as Fund Raising Records).

[441] Starrett, "Placing the Physically Handicapped," 1.

[442] Starrett, "Placing the Physically Handicapped," 1.

[443] Entertainer Eddie Cantor is credited with coining the phrase "March of Dimes." Naomi Rogers, *Dirt and Disease: Polio before FDR* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 170.

The notion of disabled people taking a backseat in their own organizations, like many other inventions of midcentury—the nuclear family, for example—soon became re-rendered as "traditional" in the American mind, even though it was relatively new to being commonplace.[444] Changes in both philanthropic and medical practice as well as shifts in broad American conceptions of the possibilities and purposes of both fields had a profound impact on crippled children's work. First, depression and war in the 1930s and 40s motivated many philanthropic organizations to rethink their approaches. Scholar James Allen Smith describes this period as one of uncertainty and loss of control for charitable and nonprofit foundations in the United States, as these world-historical events led to cutbacks and redirections of effort. The postwar period rewarded those who had survived with a period of plenty, as from the late 1940s through the late 1960s, foundations gained new power and the confidence of the public.[445] Medicine enjoyed similar public confidence postwar: much as orthopedists became widely respected in the wake of World War I, the post-World War II United States experienced a surge of confidence in medical practitioners to solve a variety of bodily and even social problems. As David Serlin has described, Americans came to see non-normative bodies or desires as fixable by medical consumerism, a way to fit within and glorify the nation.[446] These postwar events, of course, postdate the initial changes in the crippled children's movement in the late 1930s. Nevertheless, they do help to explain why the changes that professionalization wrought were so lasting and covered over a contrasting past so thoroughly.

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[444] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

[445] James Allen Smith, "The Evolving American Foundation," in *Philanthropy and the Nonprofit Sector in a Changing America*, ed. Charles T. Clotfelter and Thomas Ehrlich (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 40.

[446] David Serlin, *Replaceable You: Engineering the Body in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 5.

Beginning in earnest in the 1930s, crippled children's organizations placed heightened importance on the medical side of disability and minimized the presence of disabled voices in their communications and resources. The shift in the ISCC had been gradual, turning itself toward more professional concerns in its advice literature. By the 1950s, the NFIP also focused its messaging on eradicating disability through funding vaccine research and rehabilitation. Prioritizing eradication meant further abstraction from disabled experience and less interest in changing society than ensuring that bodies matched societal norms.[447] As a result, voices of experience became progressively less central to the operations and rhetoric of the big organizations, and the activism of the early movement fizzled into the pithiness and imagery of an advertising campaign.

Perhaps more significantly for this inquiry, the image of disability the NFIP sought to promote contrasted with the one that had historically been presented by the disabled activists within the ISCC. As Paul Longmore has noted, building on Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's theorization of gazing at disability, individual staring and collective gazing are distinct; the collective gaze at images of disability has not only been socially sanctioned historically but also "communal, planned, and ritualized."[448] In short, images of people with disabilities teach lookers how to look and encourage viewers to continue these specific styles of looking.[449] The children who appeared in March of Dimes posters taught different lessons than those who appeared in the pages of *The Crippled Child*, primarily due to the broader collective context that the poster child

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[447] For a discussion of medicine as social curative in the mid twentieth century US, see Serlin, *Replaceable You.*

[448] Paul K. Longmore, "The Cultural Framing of Disability: Telethons as a Case Study," *PMLA* 120, no. 2 (2005): 503. See also Paul K. Longmore, *Telethons: Spectacle, Disability, and the Business of Charity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 10; Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[449] For a brief introduction to types of looking, see Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Seeing the Disabled: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography," in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 335–74.

occupied and the lack of individual expression the format afforded. Poster children may have been braced and crutched, but they were walking; *who* was walking and *where* they might be walking (and how their own efforts contributed to this) were less important than the fact that the viewer's dimes had helped them do the walking.

From International Society to Easter Seals

In this chapter, inquiry into how activism intersected with philanthropy and medicine becomes particularly important, as this intersection within the crippled children's movement became untenable during this period. This disconnect was due to a variety of factors, most prominently contemporaneous shifts in medical and philanthropic practices and priorities. The shift from the International Society to Easter Seals provides an instructive example of these changes, showcasing how image-focused philanthropy and medical expertise unseated disabled experience as a guiding principle of the evolving organization.

Crippled Children Seals—small paper stamps sold to raise funds for children with physical disabilities—first emerged in the mid-1930s. They were based on an older concept, the popular Christmas Seal. Scandinavian philanthropists originally designed the Christmas Seal in the 1900s to raise funds to aid tuberculosis sufferers; the idea spread quickly to other countries to benefit tuberculosis organizations within their borders.[450] Designed as added postage to put on Christmas mail, Christmas Seals had the additional benefit of showcasing one's commitment to helping others and encouraging recipients to be similarly generous. The US National Tuberculosis Association took up the concept in 1907, turning it into such a runaway success that

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[450] Longmore, *Telethons*, 10-11.

one journalist claimed "the mere mention of Christmas Seals is enough to make fund raisers for other voluntary health agencies sob with envy."[451]

The ISCC's officers may or may not have sobbed, but they did borrow the successful model the National Tuberculosis Organization had set out for them thirty years earlier. For their seals, they eschewed Christmas and pinned their seal-selling to the Easter season, another mail-generating Christian holiday in the United States. Eight state societies connected to the ISCC sold the one-cent seals in 1934, and 22 in 1935. The seals' financial success was an especially thrilling boon in the context of the mid-1930s, as many fundraising entities had a difficult time gaining operating funds in the midst of the widespread financial woes of the Great Depression.[452] Like Christmas Seals, they also provided benefits beyond the funding they raised. As ISCC Director of Extension A.H. Thompson noted, "The Seals extend the privilege of support to the masses, and this in turn brings to light many new cases for treatment."[453] The Seals were by no means the first occasion for small donors to give to ISCC or associated societies. However, it did simplify and institutionalize the practice of small donations, with an added benefit of revealing other potential targets for education, medical treatment, and rehabilitation.

Seals provided another, more dubious benefit—their standardization diminished the need for disabled experience in the movement. As Thompson explained, the public was so willing and activated around the cause of crippled children that financing was only an issue without such a systematized approach to fundraising; "it is only necessary to tell the story to enough people, and the problem of finance is solved. Crippled Children Seals will tell the story."[454] If the Seals could

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[451] Richard Carter, *The Gentle Legions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 76, 75. For more on Carter and *The Gentle Legions*, see Longmore, *Telethons*, 5-8.
[452] Bakal, *Charity U.S.A.*, 29-31; Olivier Zunz, *Philanthropy in America: A History* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2014), 75.
[453] A.H. Thompson, "Financing a State, Provincial, or National Society," *The Crippled Child*, June 1935, 15.
[454] Thompson, "Financing a State, Provincial, or National Society," 15.

tell the story, of what use were human storytellers? The disabled activists who told their own stories so prolifically were no longer necessary to the project of funding.

The Seals eventually became synonymous with the organization itself. By 1952, the National Society for Crippled Children had adopted the Easter Lily that festooned the seals as its logo, and in 1967 the organization officially changed its name to Easter Seals.[455] It is interesting to note that both the ISCC and the NFIP were eventually renamed after their most famous fundraising method, centering the method of fundraising over the actual clients these organizations claimed to serve and sacrificing clarity of purpose for name recognition.

The magazines which served as the voice of the crippled children's movement shifted their focuses as well. The *Hospital School Journal* was the first to lose steam. By the late 1920s, the publication had lost touch with the more activist elements in its makeup. Contributions to the magazine became more reflective of the professional experiences of nurses than of children or adults with disabilities. In part, this was likely a function of the change in the former VLBHS that began when Blanche Browne left in 1918 and continued when the hospital-school joined with the Michigan Children's Hospital in the early 1920s.[456] Nurses worked throughout the multi-unit institution, serving all manner of disabled, ill, or injured children, whereas crippled children were only at the home in Farmington. Like the nondisabled philanthropists writing for *The Crippled Child*, the nurses and reporters writing for late 1920s issues of the *Hospital School Journal* found inspiration in the children they served. Take for example the poem "And Yet—I Saw You Smile!" in which the poet, a nurse at the Children's Hospital, was astounded that a disabled child still had the capacity to enjoy life. In the end, she concludes that perhaps God

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[455] "The Story of Easter Seals," 2020, https://www.easterseals.com/who-we-are/history/.

[456] Henry Edward Abt, *The Care, Cure, and Education of the Crippled Child* (Elyria, OH: The International Society for Crippled Children, 1924), 106.

made disabilities to teach her something about "mercy, service, love---To make me sympathize."[457] This sentiment was not so different from some expressed by philanthropists in *The Crippled Child,* but the dwindling appearance of other, more radical narratives made its statement more and more characteristic of the magazine's overall tone.

In another sign of changes in progress within the movement, the *Hospital School Journal* reported on Blanche Van Leuven Browne's death in Fall 1930's issue. "Miss Blanche Van Leuven Browne Dies Suddenly" reported the headline. The piece indicated that the news had come just at the time of publication and had been hastily added. "Thousands of Michigan people will remember that Miss Browne was the pioneer in this state in the work for crippled children" as well as "the founder of this magazine, about seventeen years ago." The piece promised that the next issue would contain a fitting memorial.[458] However, when the next issue came, no such memorial appeared. Not only was there no mention of Browne and her death within its pages, but there were tributes to others—several nurses at the hospital and a reprint of one to the nurse who was also the hospital's superintendent.[459] This juxtaposition would likely have seemed like the ultimate, final insult to Browne. The issue also contained pages of filler, including generic household hints, suggesting that the piece was not cut due to space limitations.

That issue, Winter 1931, was also the last issue of the *Hospital School Journal*, although its editors did not seem to know this at the time. Its last issue shows a move toward becoming a more general interest health publication than it had once been. The cover featured a diverse group of children greeting the dinner gong at the Farmington colony, but the rest of the magazine does not focus on these children. Rather, it focused on general topics—how to make a house safe

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[457] Catherine Williams, "And Yet—I Saw You Smile!" *Hospital School Journal*, Summer 1930, 3.
[458] "Miss Blanche Van Leuven Browne Dies Suddenly," *Hospital School Journal*, Fall 1930, 4.
[459] "Those Who Have Been Steadfast," 4; "The Contribution of Margaret A. Rogers, R.N.", *Hospital School Journal*, Winter 1931, 8.

for children, the difference between the practice of medicine in the olden days and now, and even health and home tips for the general reader. In short, the identity of the magazine had changed—whereas it had been an organ to promote the cause of crippled children generally and the MHS in particular, it had become a vehicle to promote the concepts of health and hospitals, something that other publications already had well in hand. It is little wonder that it fizzled out after this lukewarm issue, with little specific purpose to guide it.

The Crippled Child fared better, surviving until the late 1950s, but the voices of disabled contributors dwindled. Nearing the fourth anniversary of its publication, in 1927 *The Crippled Child* unceremoniously dropped its charismatic managing editor Joe F. Sullivan. Vivian Hackett, now the only listed editor of the periodical, did not explain the change, only noting that he "is a conspicuous example of what is possible in one who suffers under severe physical handicaps" and that the organization "express[ed its] profound appreciation of his valued services."[460] She also noted that the aims of the publication remained the same—to treat holistically the problem of the Crippled Child—but the new organization would hopefully be more helpful. The description is a bit vague about what, precisely, would be different about the redesigned periodical, but there are a few clues. Contributions would be made "by those who are able to write with ample knowledge and authority. Our appeal is, therefore, to orthopaedic (sic) surgeons, nurses, social and welfare workers, educators, members of service clubs and other lay organizations, and, indeed, to all who desire to keep in touch with the development of the work and would seek to have a part in it."[461]Although people with disabilities could technically fit into several of these categories, one would be hard-pressed to find within this description a

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[460] "Editorial," *The Crippled Child*, May-June 1927, 3.
[461] "Editorial," *The Crippled Child*, May-June 1927, 3.

commitment to providing connection, inspiration, or information to people with disabilities about their own movement.

With Sullivan gone, *The Crippled Child* became more and more professionalized, transforming into a journal for social workers and medical professionals just as Hackett had hoped it would. A convention speech from the late 1930s suggests how successful the organization had been in making the shift to professional involvement: "Lay Participation in the Work of Crippled Children."[462] Whereas once almost all participation in crippled children's work was lay participation, it now became enough of a rarity to warrant a piece offering suggestions on how laypersons could become involved.

One key ISCC change during the late 1930s was a new emphasis on the prevention of disablement. This shift was rendered by 1938's ISCC President Paul King as the third element of a three-part shift in the movement's work—from humanitarian sympathy, to economic reason, and finally to prevention, "not as a final step in the program, but as an accompanying activity."[463] In this, the ISCC seemed to resolve to follow through on points raised by Solenberger years before (discussed in chapter 2), claiming that preventing the existence, rather than improving the lives of disabled children, was the wisest avenue for crippled children's work.[464] This emphasis on prevention was an aim which, naturally, did not lend itself to promoting the voices of successful people with disabilities.

The words of crippled children served new ends in this new philanthropic world. Take for example the postcard that Jeannie sent to a purchaser of Easter Seals in 1947, thanking him for buying Easter Seals to help fund her trip to Camp Daddy Allen: "Thanks for helping to send me

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[462] Henry Stillwell, "Lay Participation in the Work of Crippled Children," *The Crippled Child*, June 1938, 38-39.
[463] Paul King, "Our Society—An Economic Necessity," *The Crippled Child,* June 1938, 4.
[464] Edith Reeves Solenberger, "Why Have Cripples?" *The Crippled Child*, September-October 1924, 4.

to camp by buying Easter Seals. Having a swell time. Your friend, Jeannie."[465] There are several more of these in the Disability History Museum's online collections—from Joanne, Lucy, and "Anna and the other kids."[466] Unlike the letter from Casimir Koralewski Jr. that began the previous chapter, these cards were not requests but rather expressions of gratitude. The children writing them did not state their needs or desires; rather, they offered assurances that, through the generosity of the recipient, their needs were met.

Some writing attributed to children also seems unlikely to have been written by children at all. *Michigan's Crippled Children*, the newsletter published by the Michigan Society for Crippled Children, provides an instructive example. The front page holds a piece called "An Appeal From Three Little Crippled Kiddies," ostensibly authored by three children named Mary, Billy, and Jim, who desperately wanted readers to contribute funds to the organization by buying Opportunity Seals. Upon examination, however, the veracity of this piece seems suspect. Unlike the children's writing found in Smiles or institutional periodicals, the letter calling for the purchase of Opportunity Seals contained a great deal of vernacular language that tried to imitate the ways that children speak, but are unlikely to write—"P'raps," instead of "perhaps," "'Cause" for because, and the insertion of "oh, gee."[467] This language is in fact closer in form and tone to the poetry of various nondisabled philanthropists discussed in chapter 2 than the writings of real children in the same magazines. The efficacy of using children's words for their sentimental push was clearly still appreciated, but the actual authorship of children unnecessary.

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[465] "Camp Daddy Allen—Postcard from Jeannie," September 3, 1947, Disability History Museum, https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=328.

[466] "Camp Daddy Allen—Postcard from Joanne Schafer," August 29, 1948, Disability History Museum, (https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/catcard.html?id=326 "Camp Daddy Allen—Postcard from Lucy," August 31, 1945, Disability History Museum, https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/catcard.html?id=283; "Camp Easter Seal / Camp Daddy Allen," August 19, 1949, Disability History Museum, https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/catcard.html?id=327.

[467] Mary, Billy, and Jim, "An Appeal From Three Little Crippled Kiddies," *Michigan's Crippled Children*, March 1935, 1. Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

Overwhelmingly, then, children's voices were limited in the new age of the movement. Their images, however, were more present than ever before. Disabled activists, as discussed in the first two chapters, had long been concerned about the public images presented of the children in their care, wishing to emphasize their capabilities and resist overly pitying images typical of fundraising ploys. The new era brought new emphases: choosing the most appealing children for fundraising purposes. As Longmore describes in his discussion of poster children, such children needed to be disabled enough to raise sympathy, but not so much as to offend the nondisabled eye; those chosen for Easter Seals in particular tended to appear "plucky overcomers."[468]

This move to a more philanthropic and professionalized angle also lent itself to a shift in the organization's perception of its longevity and role in American society. In 1979, Carl Bakal released a weighty tome that promised to inquire into the nature of charity in America. He treated a variety of organizations, including both the National Easter Seal Society for Crippled Children and Adults and the National Foundation/March of Dimes. He closed his discussion of the former by reflecting on the sources of funding for this charity. The titular Easter Seals in fact only provided about 4 percent of the organization's funding. Almost half of the Society's funds came from state and federal government programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and Veterans and Vocational programs. Moreover, there were many state programs that took responsibility for the care of disabled children and adults (a clear win, we might note, for the old guard who wanted state services provided). He asked former executive director Jayne Shover what the point of Easter Seals and its relatively small expenditures and numbers served in the face of the large-scale state services already available. In response, Bakal noted, she "waved the American flag":

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[468] Paul K. Longmore, "'Heaven's Special Child': The Making of Poster Children," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 37; I would characterize MoD poster children as similarly "plucky."

"Part of being American is helping others…The beauty of the Easter Seal Campaign and getting millions to contribute to it is that it fosters the idea of helping others. That's the very essence of America and I hope we never lose it."[469] Seals, no longer touted as an innovative way to fundraise, had instead become significant because of their meaning, their connection with the public on a moral and ideological level rather than the money they brought into the organization; in short, they had become advertising. They provided the façade of private action and ownership even as public money funded their efforts. The society's efforts were no longer about changing minds, and they no longer wished to have their provider function taken over by the state. Instead, they wished to continue as a philanthropic organization—potentially redundant, but providing a moral function for the average American, teaching them about giving and taking care of one another.

A New Challenger: The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis

By the late 1930s, the ISCC was no longer the largest game in town when it came to crippled children's work. The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (NFIP), later known as the March of Dimes, changed public understandings of and approaches to crippled children. It made two key changes to public awareness of crippled children's work: it narrowed the pool of relevant children to polio survivors, and it used advertising techniques to center the images, rather than the words or stories, of disabled children in their campaigns.[470]

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[469] Bakal, *Charity U.S.A.,* 149.

[470] Polio is an infection caused by a virus which uses a fecal-oral transmission route, though this was not apparent during the first half of the twentieth century; instead, a variety of theories about insect-based, airborne, waterborne, and other forms of transmission floated around, making it difficult for anyone to know how to avoid contracting the disease. Polio can be fatal, or it can be so mild that it is thought to be a milder illness or never noticed at all—indeed, the vast majority of cases are on the mild end of the spectrum. It is most known for its tendency to cause various forms of paralysis due to its impact on nerve cells that control movement. Some patients experienced bulbar polio, in which the virus impacted motor nerves that allow breathing. Hospitals treated such patients with another noted symbol of polio: the Drinker respirator, or iron lung, invented in the late 1920s. As sanitation improved, fewer and

The origins of the NFIP are tangled within the myth of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the longest-serving US president and arguably the most famous polio survivor.[471] After contracting paralytic polio in 1921, Roosevelt fell in love with water treatments at a small resort in Warm Springs, Georgia. He purchased the location and turned it into a polio paradise, establishing the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation for its continued maintenance. The polio crusade soon grew more extensive, and Roosevelt more enmeshed within the image of polio and polio fundraising; Birthday Balls, dances held on Roosevelt's birthday each year at which small donors paid to "Dance So that Others Might Walk," became a particularly successful fundraising scheme.[472] This direct connection between Roosevelt and polio fundraising grew problematic when Roosevelt made more contentious political moves; he announced the formation of the nonpartisan National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis in 1938 to mitigate these criticisms.[473]

The NFIP/March of Dimes' exclusive focus on polio and the greater specialization of medical professionals led to a division in who was considered when talking about "crippled children." Polio survivors had always been a critical part of the crippled children's movement, both in terms of the disabled activists who informed it (Browne, Sullivan, and Lovewell were all polio survivors) and in its public face. However, the NFIP effectively rebranded polio as a concept. Images of polio to the nation at large before the NFIP included "the poorest, dirtiest

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fewer people contracted the disease in infancy and instead faced its stronger effects as older children or in young adulthood. David M. Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8-9; Daniel J. Wilson, *Polio* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2009), 2-3, 64-65; Rogers, *Dirt and Disease*, 2.

[471] Some analyses have questioned his diagnosis, favoring Guillain-Barré Syndrome as an explanation for his symptoms; regardless, as Oshinsky points out, he perceived himself, and others perceived him to be, a polio survivor. See Oshinsky, *Polio*, 28; Armond S. Goldman et al., "Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (FDR's) (1882–1945) 1921 Neurological Disease Revisited; the Most Likely Diagnosis Remains Guillain–Barré Syndrome," *Journal of Medical Biography* 24, no. 4 (November 2016): 452–59, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967772015605738; José Berciano, "Additional Arguments Supporting That Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Paralytic Illness Was Related to Guillain-Barré Syndrome," *Journal of Medical Biography* 26, no. 2 (May 2018): 142–43, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967772017749691.

[472] Oshinsky, *Polio*, 49.

[473] Oshinsky, *Polio*, 47-53; see also Rogers, *Dirt and Disease,* 166-171; David W. Rose, *March of Dimes* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub, 2003), 9-14.

children, not affluent adults in the prime of life, and with immigrants in slums, not Yankees from long-established families."[474] Polio was feared at midcentury in part because it became abundantly clear that the disease did not follow the rules commonly believed about disease and sanitation—middle-class children in clean homes were infected as often or more than working-class children living in conditions that public health workers considered slovenly.[475]

Polio also had no hereditary factor, meaning that eugenic practices were no solution for its ills. As Blanche Van Leuven Browne had realized early on, aiding crippled children was more easily done when one could clearly delineate a difference between crippled children and other "dysgenic" groups. When scientists determined that polio had no genetic factor, it meant that children with polio presented no threat to a eugenically-minded donor who might balk at aiding congenitally disabled children to lead lives which may include work, public life, marriage, and reproduction. The *Hospital School Journal* celebrated the finding in 1920 by titling a letter about the causes of polio from the Eugenics Record Office "Not Hereditary."[476] Besides the joy of increased scientific knowledge, this discovery meant that the polio survivor was the perfect image to garner widespread attention—donors of all classes could easily imagine this to be their own child and their disablement through no fault of their parents or their genes. The inciting incident for creating the March of Dimes—FDR's own disability—proved this rule, showing that even the wealthy and powerful could not avoid disablement by polio.

The unpredictablility, cross-class infection schema, and the inability to determine a sensible pattern of transmission stoked a powerful fear of poliomyelitis from parents and

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[474] Rogers, *Dirt and Disease*, 1. For associations between disease and immigrants, poverty, and race, see Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[475] Oshinsky, *Polio*, 4.

[476] "Not Hereditary," *Hospital School Journal*, December 1919-January 1920, 8.

American society more broadly. The NFIP capitalized on this preexisting fear, growing it to legendary, unforgettable proportions. As Oshinsky argues, the dread of polio did not begin with the NFIP. However, the NFIP turned it to its own ends: "The genius of the National Foundation lay in its ability to single out polio for special attention, making it seem more ominous and more curable than other diseases."[477] Their use of fear created a new model of giving, subdividing philanthropic efforts into specific medical diagnoses more strictly than had been done before, and the fear of the specific, singular disease played a role in this. Despite the breadth of havoc wrought by polio, its mortality rate was never as huge as the media attention might suggest—at polio's height, ten times as many children died in accidents and three times as many of cancer.[478] Of course, the real, visceral fear of polio was not as much about death as about disablement, and this is a fear that NFIP's image-focused campaign manipulated adeptly.

In addition to stoking this fear, the NFIP downplayed criticisms that such fear might be unwarranted or counterproductive. A 1951 pamphlet released by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis collected 101 questions and answers about polio. Many of these collected the usual epidemiological questions—can I get it from swimming? Should children go to movies or travel during polio season? Is there a vaccine? However, toward the end of the 101 questions we get into some social topics. "Isn't there a chance you might cause undue fear if you impress young children with the necessity for polio precautions?"[479] The pamphlet took this blithely, noting that there was no need to be specific about polio to emphasize the health principles which helped avoid the disease. A thousand memories of polios and nonpolios alike suggest that things

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[477] Oshinsky, *Polio*, 5.
[478] Oshinsky, *Polio*, 5.
[479] "101 Questions and Answers about Polio," 15. Health - brochures and newsletters, 1940-1951. Urban League of St. Louis Records. University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Washington University Libraries. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, African American Communities, http://www.africanamericancommunities.amdigital.co.uk.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/Documents/Details/wua00368_s08_b004_f043.

were not that simple—that polio was a lingering cloud of fear of which they were very much aware. A 1998 documentary on polio called it "A Paralyzing Fear."[480]

The collective fear that allowed anyone to be a potential victim could be a powerful motivator. Historians and memoirists of polio at midcentury have frequently emphasized the role of public fear in polio experience—that is, the national, social experience of polio is rendered not just as something that patients and families experienced but also an entire country, encouraged to take measures like avoiding swimming pools, drenching their homes in insecticide, and cleanliness measures which surely seemed more extreme to modern readers before the COVID-19 pandemic: worries about airborne droplets, handshakes, and handling money; cleaning products and chiropractic adjustments designed to prevent polio infection.[481] And, of course, the NFIP offered a solution to mitigate that fear: supporting their efforts to treat and prevent polio.

Changes in polio itself—its infection rate and the styles of treatment used to combat it—also contributed to both rise in public fear and public support of the NFIP at midcentury. While the rate of polio remained lower than other causes of childhood death, the rate of infection increased in 1940s and 50s: "While the 1916 epidemic remained the most severe in American history the years from 1944 to 1955 recorded ten of the worst epidemic years in the United States between 1912 and 1970, and the 1952 epidemic was second only to 1916 in severity."[482] The previously mentioned shift to an older group of patients also made a difference, evoking terror well past the age that previous generations of parents may have expected to deal with polio infection. Shifts in medical treatments for polio also made its survivors a much more formidable group. Scholar Jacqueline Foertsch describes the contingent of polios who came of age in this

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[480] *A Paralyzing Fear*, directed by Nina Gilden Seavey (First Run Features, 1998).
[481] Oshinsky, *Polio,* 2-3.
[482] Wilson, *Living With Polio,* 10.

middling period as a “new nation”—stricken before vaccines were available but after antibiotics and other medical strategies were available to save lives that might previously have been lost.[483]

Polio specifically represented a potentially solvable problem for the increasingly medical approach to childhood disability. Though cure was imperfect, prevention seemed possible if scientists could only crack the code of a vaccine.[484] Prevention of other common disabling causes—accidents, congenital disability—either required sustained investment impossible to implement completely or depended upon eugenic ideologies which had fallen somewhat out of favor. Tuberculosis of bones and joints, the other major cause of crippling in the early 20th century US, had begun to die out as TB efforts focusing on other TB forms succeeded.[485] Isolating one thing made cure more possible—ending crippling was ending polio, rather than taking on the large issue of disability more generally. Polio had the most practical appeal of the crippled-child subdivisions. Polio was a highly solvable, singular problem, unlike the earlier movement’s emphasis on a greater variety of disabilities.

More broadly, American society post-World War II was in the process of embracing a nationalist form of medical consumerism, putting faith in medicine to solve social problems like war, disablement, even conflicts surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity. As historian David Serlin put it, "Those Americans who experienced their lives, and thus their identities, through the veil of the extraordinary body could use the tools of medical science to insert themselves into a national narrative in which rehabilitating one's physical body made one more

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[483] Foertsch, *Bracing Accounts,* 135.

[484] For a more detailed breakdown of ideologies and emphases surrounding the search for a polio vaccine, see Rogers, *Dirt and Disease*, 182-189; Oshinsky, *Polio*.

[485] M. Monir Madkour, Kitab E. Al-Otaibi, R. Al Swailem, “Historical Aspects of Tuberculosis,” in *Tuberculosis*, ed. M. Monir Madkour (New York: Springer, 2003), 29. The late twentieth century, however, saw a resurgence of all forms of tuberculosis due to HIV infection. Ravindra Kumar Garg and Dilip Singh Somvanshi, “Spinal Tuberculosis: A Review,” *The Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine* 34, no. 5 (September 2011): 440–54, https://doi.org/10.1179/2045772311Y.0000000023.

tangibly and visibly American than ever before."[486] This capacity for cure made polio's stubborn persistence and its particularly vicious presence in the US "ironic, even unfair, that polio seemed to target the world's most advanced nation," as historian David Oshinsky observed.[487] "Americans were primed to see polio as an indigenous plague with an indigenous solution-- a problem to be solved, like so many others, through a combination of ingenuity, voluntarism, determination, and money."[488]

Perhaps ironic is another key development in polio treatment during this time—the Kenny method, which presented a clear challenge to the male-dominated medical establishment. While most doctors were immobilizing polio patients, the Australian nurse Sister Elizabeth Kenny believed that inactivity was in fact harmful to the patient, favoring exercise, hot packs, and more patient-led treatments. Part of the difference in the two methods was the intended outcome, with immobilizers prioritizing straightness of limb and normative appearance and Kenny more interested in function and use of limbs. Despite the overwhelming faith in scientific medicine—research-based, methodical—patients and families impacted by polio never wanted to stop using Kenny's methods long enough to put them to clinical trial.[489] However, both methods focused on fixing the individual body through physical, medical methods; both were medical treatments, not political ideologies. Thus, the debate between the two was part of a single shift toward a medically-focused approach to childhood disablement.

If American society was culturally primed to pay attention to polio at midcentury, other developments also set the polio survivor in place to hold unique rhetorical power. Particularly generative was the shift in ages impacted by polio during midcentury. Whereas in the early

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[486] Serlin, *Replaceable You*, 14.
[487] Oshinsky, *Polio*, 4.
[488] Oshinsky, *Polio*, 4.
[489] Rogers, *Polio Wars*, 98.

twentieth-century polio epidemics, most patients were under five, the midcentury outbreaks impacted older children and adults.[490] Finally, the fact that polio got a bump in attention and investment from the notable politician and president Franklin Delano Roosevelt surely contributed to the rise of polio in the public consciousness. As Longmore has highlighted, despite the mythology that FDR hid his disability, the historical record suggests that in fact he presented himself as in the process of overcoming disablement.[491] He was a powerful symbol of and for polio and polio survivors, both benefactor and patient.

However, the shift in crippled children's work that the NFIP represented went beyond locating a more specific target for attention. The NFIP approach to outreach was different as well, built out of FDR's ideas of what polio meant and what its survivors needed from American society. Whereas the earlier movement had incorporated the voices of both disabled adults and children, the NFIP focused on images of children, not words, and rarely highlighted disabled adults. Instead of promoting the education and broad social and political change that earlier work emphasized, the NFIP embraced individualistic approaches to treatment and rehabilitation. Society needed to be ready for polio to hit them and those around them, but not necessarily to broadly change social behaviors or environments to incorporate polio survivors into American employment, education, and social activity.

The circumstances of the NFIP's origin also lastingly impacted the racial focus of the solutions and images they promoted. The earlier crippled children's movement originated in predominantly White cities, like early twentieth century Toledo, Detroit, and Cleveland, that were open to giving lip service to integration. The NFIP had its roots at the Warm Springs resort in rural Georgia, where the population was more racially diverse than in ISCC strongholds, and

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[490] Wilson, *Living with Polio,* 14.
[491] Longmore, *Telethons*, 13.

segregation was rigidly written into law and already encoded into the resort's customs. The segregation at Warm Springs continued into its years as a rehabilitation center; Black Americans worked at Warm Springs, while the center rejected Black polio patients. The belief of many White physicians that poliomyelitis did not affect Black children at the same rates as White children, an inaccuracy fueled by inequitable access to medical care, worsened this injustice.[492] NFIP campaigns envisioned the polio survivor as a White child and depicted this vision in their widespread anti-polio campaigns.

The NFIP began efforts to include children from all races in polio care as early as the late 1930s, in response to criticisms from Black civil rights and health activists. Black poster child concepts arose in the mid-1940s amid much controversy within the organization; the NFIP eventually released the posters only as a special, supplementary poster, less important and celebrated than the White "one standard child" on the campaigns' main posters.[493] Moreover, the reasoning that prompted these posters was less concerned with the social significance of including images of Black children in the campaign, or even with interest in appeasing activists calling for investment in the health and medical care of Black Americans. Rather, the images on these posters were intended to appeal to African American populations to inspire them to donate to the NFIP's anti-polio campaigns.[494] The image—not evidence of equitable treatment or statistics on the number of Black children cared for by the organization—would serve as the attractor.

The NFIP was perhaps more than other philanthropic organizations associated with their visual and material culture, particularly dime canisters and posters. These items served as visual

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[492] Rogers, "Race and the Politics of Polio," 784-85.
[493] Stephen E. Mawdsley, "'Dancing on Eggs': Charles H. Bynum, Racial Politics, and the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, 1938–1954," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 84, no. 2 (2010): 239.
[494] Mawdsley, "Dancing on Eggs," 238.

representations of polio and childhood disability more broadly—what does the crippled child look like? The NFIP wanted the polio child to have a very specific image, particularly the poster children. The significance of the appearance of the child became especially clear when the NFIP began considering who would be their Black poster child. Appearance played a critical role in the selection of the right candidate for these alternative posters. The NFIP director of chapters thought Calvin Mayfield was a fine choice: "I think this youngster would make an ideal poster child. He is very attractive looking and will be four years old in October. His parents are very intelligent people and fine looking as well."[495] Looks were a core feature that made Mayfield a good choice, not only Calvin's but also his parents, who were also described as "very intelligent"—unquestionably an evaluation of the respectability of this family and their suitability to appear in national media linked with the NFIP. The accouterment of the poster child was also critical. NFIP's Director of Interracial Activities noted that "Johnny asked me to make certain that Calvin (Mayfield)'s shoes and braces are of the best quality and fit him properly at this time, and that his crutches are suitable for his age and handicap. Of course you know how important it is to have the proper type of appliances and equipment when we take pictures of poster children."[496] Clothing was also essential, as the child needed at least two changes for photographs, and the organization was willing to pay for additional wardrobe needs to get the best images possible.

If the image of the disabled child took primacy of place in the NFIP, the words of children themselves declined dramatically in importance, to the point that organizers doubted whether or not these children could even truly communicate. As C. David Ohman, Jr. wrote in an internal memo lamenting the difficulty of getting any useful information for press releases out of

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[495] Warren D. Coss to Charles H. Bynum, May 28, 1956, Calvin Mayfield, 1956, Box 7, Fund Raising Records.

[496] Charles H. Bynum to Warren Coss, May 29, 1956, Calvin Mayfield, 1956, Box 7, Fund Raising Records.

the 1954 poster child or his family, "You simply can't quote a four-year-old boy."[497] The situation presented a further complication in that Delbert Dains spoke less than many other children his age, so even if they wished to quote him, it would be only "baby words."[498] Dains was far from the only child that NFIP materials opted to talk about and photograph rather than quote. Organizers culled most of the information in the press releases about poster children from the families, giving parents much greater influence over narrativizing their children's experiences of disablement than the ISCC ever offered. Even in these textual sources, descriptions of the child were far more prevalent than their own words about their actions and activities.[499]

The rendering of the crippled child as a primarily visual entity, rather than a verbal or written or intellectual one, molded how American society imagined and perceived children with disabilities. This type of image-focused sentimentality culminated in the telethon fundraising format, which became a central tool of disability fundraising across organizations by the 1960s.[500] Historian and polio survivor Paul Longmore wrote his final book about telethons. In it, he claimed that this "distinctively American invention" gave nondisabled people voice, but not disabled people.[501] Instead, disabled people were pictured in separate spaces, not talking, "silent partners." [502] They were not oddities to be gazed upon, but rather ordinary middle-class Americans; yet they did not get to speak for themselves. In his work, Longmore did not focus on

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[497] Memo from C. David Ohman, Jr. to Dorothy Ducas and Don St John, June 26, 1953, re. Biography of 1954 Poster Child, Delbert (Debby) Dains, 1954, Box 7, Fund Raising Records.
[498] Memo from C. David Ohman, Jr. to Dorothy Ducas and Don St John, June 26, 1953.
[499] For example, one request to follow up with several former poster children suggested that the recipient get "updated biographical data" and "a couple of cute pictures of each child –informal shots of course, at work or play, with health and happiness prevailing." Memo from Trudy Whitman to Frank Chappell, May 28, 1952, re. File on MOD poster children, General, Box 7, Fund Raising Records.
[500] Longmore, "'Heaven's Special Child,'" 34.
[501] Longmore, *Telethons,* xiii.
[502] Longmore, *Telethons*, 205.

any particular organization as the bad actor or the instigator of this particular problematic mode of representation. The problem was the status of American culture itself, the culture that allowed such appeals and displays to resonate. [503] The NFIP had a large hand in crafting and perpetuating this culture.

NFIP rhetoric also changed the terms around who needed to take action and what kind of action they needed to take in the matter of the crippled child. The change they wanted to make within American society was not to change anyone's mind about disability or promote accessibility, as earlier efforts had included. Rather, it focused on making Americans "polio conscious," which was closer to a public health awareness campaign intent on eradicating a disease than a message designed to benefit polio survivors. When it did take on benefits to the disabled person, that work was firmly in the camp of the individual and their family. As Roosevelt put it: "To every physically handicapped person and to his family we need to impart the idea that he owes it to himself and to society also to make a supreme effort to come back, to readjust himself, to return to normal life in spite of his physical handicap."[504] Society needed information about polio, but the polio survivor and their family needed to do the work of benefiting the polio survivor for themselves. The prevailing wisdom of the NFIP was that the disabled person needed to readjust their thinking, which would enable them to return to "normal life." The earlier movement was also concerned about the mental state and sticktoitiveness of the crippled child. However, much of their emphasis was on the able-bodied world—if the crippled child lacked ambition, it was because pampering parents and insensitive visitors had made them that way. To be polio conscious, on the other hand, was to be aware that early medical

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[503] Carol J. Gill, "Afterword," in Longmore, *Telethons*, 220.

[504] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "'Another Milestone:' A Letter to Friends at Warm Springs," *The Polio Chronicle*, December 1932, 1. Disability History Museum. https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=1068.

intervention was needed to prevent crippling; to fight hard from the very first to regain physical ability; and to fit into a world that needed no changing.

The NFIP's activities also suggest their shifts in priority; although there is some overlap with earlier efforts, there is also a marked inattention to hallmarks of the earlier movement. As archivist David Rose explains, "Financial aid award to polio patients and their families were only part of the foundation's comprehensive program to provide the most effective response to the complex realities of epidemics."[505] There were also social, philanthropic activities of medical maintenance and fundraising, like Polio Emergency Volunteers, laypeople who aided medical staff with polio care, and emergency relief funds which benefited hospitals through providing funds for supplies and occasionally even buildings.[506] Most of these benefits were associated with medical care or polio prevention, not the development of polio survivors as future disabled citizens. Education, by contrast, was all right to provide, but it was not the goal of the NFIP to provide or advocate for it. 101 facts about polio included only one education-related question: "Can children with polio have lessons while in the hospital?" The pamphlet answered, "Yes. Doctors think education is beneficial for children after the acute period. Many school systems provide teachers for children in hospitals."[507] Education, then, might be beneficial, but the NFIP would go no further to provide it.

Disabled Voices

Disabled writers continued contributing to crippled children's work both inside and outside of the National Society and the March of Dimes, but they too took up different tactics

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[505] Rose, *March of Dimes*, 23.
[506] Rose, *March of Dimes*, 23.
[507] "101 Questions and Answers about Polio," 15.

than their predecessors. They styled their writing as self-help literature, rather than as calls for social and political, as well as individual, change. This writing harmonized well with the new tone of the NFIP approach to disablement, focused on individual and family response to hardship and medical intervention rather than sociopolitical change and education. In this new wave of writing, individuals must take individual action to better their situation, and their families must support them. The texts encouraged personal striving for the disabled reader and supportive aid (but not pity or babying) by the family who may be reading. Reinette Lovewell (now with the additional surname Donnelly) wrote a pamphlet for the NFIP, "Getting Acquainted With Your Brace." A callback to the old claims to expertise— the byline read "by Reinette Lovewell Donnelly *who has worn braces since childhood*"—was angled towards a self-help purpose.[508] The prose is such that it could be read by adults or children, brace-wearers or just brace-carers in the disabled person's family. It offered only small bouts of creative description before turning its attention to the practical details of brace care.

Works outside of the ISCC and NFIP fit into these self-help paradigms as well. In her review of Betsey Barton's 1944 book *And Now To Live Again*, Mary E. MacDonald wrote, "Sometimes in rehabilitation literature the preoccupation in terms of agency contribution is so great as to obscure the fact that no one passively 'is rehabilitated,' however important may be the opportunities opened up to him."[509] Not so with Barton's book. Barton-- daughter of US representative, advertising mogul, and religious businessman Bruce Barton, known for his masculine vision of Christ in *The Man Nobody Knows*— was experienced in the ways of

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[508] Reinette Lovewell Donnelly, "Getting Acquainted With Your Brace," AC 12, Boston Children's Hospital Collection, Boston, MA.

[509] Mary E. MacDonald, review of *And Now to Live Again,* by Betsey Barton, *Jobs for the Physically Handicapped*, by Louise Neuschutz, and *Normal Lives for the Disabled*, by Edna Yost, *Social Service Review* 19, No. 1 (March 1945): 131-133.

rehabilitation because she had been through it herself. Barton was paralyzed in an auto accident as a teenager and subsequently set out to coach others through the rehabilitation process through her writing. She called for her readers to learn from her experience—though, crucially, her book was not a memoir; she did not tell her own story but rather commented and advised on the issues that a person who had become disabled would face. Her central theme was self-reliance: "A great deal can be given to us from the outside. We can be given direction and encouragement and a loving atmosphere. But when we have been shown the way it is up to us to advance along it. For this is the ruthless fact of our return to wholeness: the greatest gains we make must be made by ourselves. In all of life we are finally and irrevocably, on our own."[510] The ability to restore oneself to some version of "wholeness," then, lay within the self. This framework had both commonality with and divergence from the writing of the movement's disabled activists in earlier years, who had called just as strongly for social and cultural supports as they had for individual perseverance. Barton's book, like other advisories written by disabled authors during this period, was just as much directed to family as it was to disabled people. Unlike the writings of Sullivan and Browne, who tailored themselves to a general audience and were often unenthusiastic about the efforts of family members to help the crippled child, the self-help approach favored a narrower audience, and saw the disabled reader and those closest to them as the individuals that needed to take action to better the status of themselves/their relative.

Disabled writers did still voice important correctives to the new way of thinking about disability. For one, writers like Lovewell and Barton used their work to suggest, both directly and indirectly, that their expertise was valuable, even though it was in a more individualized fashion than disabled writers had worked within previously. Moreover, most still considered

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[510] Betsey Barton, *And Now to Live Again.* New York: D. Appleton, 1944, 132.

disability unavoidable rather than being preventable or curable. They saw beyond the immediacy of the division of disabilities into discrete varietals, instead seeing the perpetuity of disablement. As Turnley Walker put it, “At every tick of the clock, somewhere in the world, a child is born with a crippling disability…At every tick of the clock, somewhere in the world, a patient, a sweetheart, a wife or a husband asks the bleak and unanswerable question, ‘Why, *why* did this have to happen?’”[511] As this selection may suggest, this does not mean that these writers conceptualized disability as positive or neutral, nor did they necessarily critique the centrality of the nondisabled family surrounding the disabled person in the new narrative. However, it did challenge the idea that a nation could eradicate disability through enough gumption, rehabilitation, or donations. Overall, though, disabled writers working within and in cooperation with these organizations did not attempt to bring back the rhetoric of the past.

Indeed, disabled people seeking social and political change were more likely to shift focus out of the organizations and away from childhood altogether. The new midcentury focus on polio, and its visual presentation in American culture, meant that childhood was doubly out of fashion for disabled activists—not only had the child images ruined nondisabled Americans’ ability to see disabled people as adults, but many of the polios who were creating output during this period had been disabled in adulthood (Turnley Walker, for example). So, emphasizing childhood directly contradicted their experience, in contrast to the old organizations which focused on *children with disabilities*, not *polio survivors*. Shell quotes Peg Kehret’s prologue to Small Steps, in which she discovers that her experience of polio beginning at age 12 changed her: “Those months, more than any other time of my life, molded my personality.”[512] Polio,

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[511] Turnley Walker, *Rise Up and Walk*, New York: Dutton, 1950. HathiTrust.
[512] Peg Kehret, *Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio* (New York: Albert Whitman, 1996), 10; as quoted in Marc Shell, *Polio and Its Aftermath: The Paralysis of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005)., 5.

Shell and Kehret suggest, was a life-altering, personality-shaping experience. It makes sense, then, that those who had experienced the disease in childhood found childhood such a critical time in their lives, one that needed attention; but a generation of polios equally (if not more strongly) shaped by the experiences of those disabled in adulthood would find an emphasis on childhood misplaced, even offensive. Those who had been disabled in childhood at midcentury, meanwhile, found it challenging to retain attention and support into adulthood.

Childhood polio survivors of midcentury frequently ended up reflecting on their childhood later in life. Daniel Wilson in his work on polio memoir draws a distinction between narratives written at midcentury and those written later, noting that the midcentury narratives tended to be "narratives of triumph with an uplifting account of how the author overcame polio through hard work, a strong will, and determination" while later ones were "more likely to be forthcoming about the powerful emotions engendered by polio, the pain and difficulty of polio rehabilitation, anger at treatment and mistreatment by medical personnel, and the shame of living with a disabled body caused by a highly feared disease."[513] These reminiscences bore a strong resemblance to the complaints registered by the earlier generations of disabled activists, the inadequacies of education and personal connection that this earlier generation struggled to change. We have comparatively few sources that give a similar amount of reflection later on in life by children in the crippled children's schools and homes led by the early twentieth century movement, making it impossible to say whether those children would have described their experiences differently as adults. Yet one thing the later remembrances of polio survivors at midcentury do present is a striking semblance to the complaints of disabled adults in the early to mid-twentieth century about their own childhoods.

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[513] Wilson, *Living with Polio*, 5.

Experiences of polio varied widely, but there are some common themes, one being simultaneously feeling isolated and overexposed. The lack of privacy could be frustrating or humiliating. Francine Falk-Allen noted that adults at her Santa Monica facility seemed to have a bit more freedom and privacy, with more space for belongings and greater separation from others in the ward, than did children, imprisoned in a crib little opportunity to move about.[514] Despite this lack of privacy (or perhaps, in part, because of it—who hasn't felt alone in a crowd?) there was little community among the children. "The arrangement of the children's ward should have afforded the opportunity to sit up and chat with kids nearby…but I don't have a single friend from that time in my life, though I keep in touch with friends I've known since before kindergarten…My recollection brings back not a single face, only a large group of anonymous afflicted children. There never was any fanfare about departures: you came in, you stayed, you left."[515] In short, many remembered it as the worst of both worlds: always surrounded by others, yet desperately lonely.

Some of the humiliations and indignities of the polio ward suggest not only a dearth of personal connection but also a surplus of active malice or harmful negligence. Harlan Hahn, a scholar, disabled activist, and polio survivor, described the medical staff as "too busy, or too calloused, to meet the basic requirements of their patients."[516] On the next page he remembers a searing incident in which a nurse placed him on the bedpan and then left him for a prolonged period, exposed to and mocked by the other children in the room with sexual jokes.[517] Robert

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[514] Francine Falk-Allen, *Not a Poster Child: Living Well with a Disability—A Memoir* (Berkeley: She Writes Press, 2018), 21.

[515] Falk-Allen, *Not a Poster Child*¸ 21-22.

[516] Harlan Hahn, Autobiography, Ch. 1 (drafts), n.d, I-8, Harlan Hahn Papers, 1823-2006, Department of Archives and Special Collections, University Library, California State University, Dominguez Hills, Carson, CA (hereafter cited as Hahn Papers).

[517] Harlan Hahn, Autobiography, Ch. 1 (drafts), n.d, I-9, Hahn Papers.

Lonardo, who was in the hospital for polio in the mid-1930s, remembered in an interview that there were “more cross people” than helpful and kind people involved with his care overall.[518]

The spread of information and misinformation about polio impacted the ways that polio survivors were treated by others. Francine Falk Allen, who contracted polio at age three, recalled the stigmas attached to polio: “You got it from the air, you got it from touching someone who didn’t wash, you got it from associating with the wrong class of people, people who lived in filthy conditions and spat on the sidewalk.”[519] The swimming pool association was particularly strong, even long after the heyday of polio pool closures: “Throughout my life people have said to me, after asking me why I limped and hearing I’d had polio, ‘You got it from swimming pools. You must have gone in swimming pools.’ I never went in a swimming pool before I was at least nine.’” [520]

These recollections also suggest the lackadaisical approach to education in many of the hospitals, homes, and rehabilitation centers polio survivors attended. This was not due to lack of time—Susan Richards Schreve remembered “hours of white space to fill” during her stays at Warm Springs, in which she “couldn’t move or read or watch television or even listen to the radio. There was no entertainment in any case, except Saturday movies or trading cards or books or card games or conversation.”[521] There was limited tutoring available, which Shreve rejected with no complaints from parents or staff, Polio survivors did overwhelmingly learn one thing: the importance to push oneself (perhaps beyond limits that would have been better unsurpassed) and to be relentlessly positive. As Shreve observed of her Warm Springs cohort, “*The Power of*

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[518] Robert Lonardo, interview by Anna Rubin, August 25, 2003, transcript, 3. Polio Oral History Collection, National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, MD (hereafter cited as Polio Oral History Collection).
[519] Falk-Allen, *Not a Poster Child,* 15.
[520] Falk-Allen, *Not a Poster Child*, 15.
[521] Susan Richards Shreve, *Warm Springs: Traces of a Childhood at FDR’s Polio Haven* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 163.

Positive Thinking was in their blood. They didn't need to read the book."[522] Formal education was replaced by a rehabilitationist ethic of willpower and determination.

Finally, it is worthwhile to note that memoirs and interviews also suggest that polio survivors found themselves confronted by social and political problems in adulthood not fixable by the individualized frameworks they had learned from their childhood experiences. Radio DJ and station manager Bob Huse, who contracted polio at age 6 in 1931, recalled an early audition in his mid-twenties stymied by the combination of an inaccessible building and a discriminatory program director. Huse needed a railing to ascend staircases, but the radio station did not have one, so when he arrived for his audition he asked two "really healthy" looking passersby to help him up the stairs. After passing the initial stages of the group interviews, the program director expressed skepticism that he could do the job; Huse noted his experience and said that the only issue would be the staircase.

"I'll pay to have a railing put up the stairs, because I really can't make those stairs," Huse said.

The program director used this as an excuse not to hire Huse, saying "No, we can't do that…We have heavy equipment coming up the stairs, and it wouldn't fit because of the rail."

Huse was not dissuaded. "I'll pay any time you've got something coming up the stairs that's too big to go up on that stairwell. I'll pay to have the railings taken off, and I'll pay to have them put back on."

"No, we can't do that."

"Are you telling me that for a hundred dollars, or fifty dollars, whatever it costs to put up a railing, that you won't let me work here now that you've seen that I'm on crutches?"

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[522] Schreve, *Warm Springs*, 163.

"It's not that at all, and I consider this discussion closed."[523]

Huse did not get that job, though he did get others and made a successful life in the radio business. But the example is illustrative of the weaknesses of the individualized approach that became ascendant during the last days of the crippled children's movement—all the ways that one could take individual responsibility could be easily limited by physical access issues and societal attitudes toward disability. Huse could not assert, bootstrap, or rehabilitate himself into a job withheld from him by these structural issues. As cure and individual rehabilitation became the key goal of work for disabled children, organization little investment in shaping society to match bodies; instead, shaping bodies to match society.

Once it had fairly well usurped the playing field for crippled children's work, the March of Dimes found itself in a strange position by the 1960s—dwindling numbers of active polio cases. The organization shifted away from polio patient advocacy after vaccinations caused US cases to plummet, taking on children with birth difference as their new project, and most recently have shifted their branding to focus on "the health of all moms and babies," including such pre-birth interventions as nutritional supplements and screenings.[524] The move left many polio survivors feeling unsupported in their twilight years and dealing with the problems of post-polio without the kind of resources and attention they remember from childhood. Foertsch describes the group as sitting "in contrast to a forward-looking, ever-healthier American society, stuck in a pre-vaccine past, and as is the case with all veterans of tragic, concluded wars, on the verge of being forgotten by the mainstream."[525]

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[523] Bob Huse, interview by Anna Rubin, May 27, 2005, transcript, Polio Oral History Collection.
[524] "Who We Are." *March of Dimes*, 2021. https://www.marchofdimes.org/mission/who-we-are.aspx
[525] Foertsch, *Bracing Accounts*, 135-36.

Of course, these survivors were not content to be forgotten. In response to these kinds of frustrations, like the activists of earlier years, these midcentury childhood polio survivors powered a new activist movement in adulthood, providing the backbone of the Disability Rights Movement. However, their activism took a much different shape, no longer compatible with the alliance their forebears had found with medical and philanthropic organizations and people. As public discourse about "the crippled child" shifted to "the polio," a group both larger and smaller than those affiliated with the ISCC had initially covered, the seeds for disability activism were planted not in an embrace of childhood, but a rejection of its centrality to disabled experience.

Conclusion

At the top of this chapter, Mabel Starrett posed a question: where were the "adult Tims" within the midcentury work for disabled children? Perhaps the reason for their absence lies within the story that gave voice to the metaphor itself: although Tim survives to the end of *A Christmas Carol*, there is no room in a narrative of Scrooge's repentance for an adult Tim.[526] As disability scholar Paul Longmore argues, the image of disabled children as "Tiny Tims" that was so prevalent in midcentury American discourse overshadowed and even worked to preclude any consideration of disabled adults as potential workers, collaborators, or contributors. Instead, the image of disability presented to nondisabled onlookers was that of a pitiable innocent willing to put in the work to become nondisabled, and to remain virtually silent while doing so. As this chapter shows, the widespread shift to a focus on image over experience and the increasing power and importance of fundraising only furthered the influence of this image.

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[526] Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol* (1843; Project Gutenberg, 2009), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/30368/30368-h/30368-h.htm

This image problem, combined with the steadily growing influence of medical approaches to disability that focused on prevention and cure rather than accommodation and social changes, meant that disabled adults found their platform dwindling in a movement they had once animated. Major disability organizations relegated their stories to brief mentions or self-help works, and their continued maintenance into adulthood shoved aside in favor of new considerations. Unsurprisingly, the notion of the poster child took up residence in the minds of many polio survivors of the era, and autobiography and memoir offer frequent references to the concept.[527] Polio survivors fueled the disability rights movement and rebelled quite particularly against the lodging of disabled people within childhood in the public mind and the public eye. Whereas the crippled children's movement of the early twentieth century had treated childhood as the root of disabled adults' discontent and a formative time in their personhood, the philanthropic giants its organizations had grown into by midcentury figured the child as image, not potential. The new generation of activists had to move away from that image to find liberation.

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[527] For example, the title of Francine Falk-Allen's memoir, *Not a Poster Child*.

CONCLUSION

In 1953, Alice Tarbell Crathern wrote a history of women's achievements in Detroit history, calling it *In Detroit Courage Was the Fashion: The Contribution of Women to the Development of Detroit from 1701 to 1951.* In it, she credited Blanche Van Leuven Browne for her role in starting her institution. However, Crathern's treatment of the institution made clear the central role that medicine, philanthropy, and professional men had come to play in crippled children's work. First, the placement of the story—in a section titled "For the Sick"—positioned Browne's contributions as being primarily about supporting the practice of medicine, and ironically suggested just the opposite of what Browne and other activists of the crippled children's movement made such a point of emphasizing: crippled children were "sick." Crathern's book had other categories that might have also seemed appropriately descriptive, like "For the Children" or "Educators" or even "Philanthropists," but she instead contextualized Browne's work as ultimately belonging to the medical realm.

The content of the section emphasized the philanthropic connection. In Crathern's telling, Browne's story serves only to contexualize Detroit Mayor James Couzens' philanthropic contributions to the Children's Hospital of Michigan in the early 1920s:

> In 1915 [Couzens] gave $10,000 for larger quarters for the Van Louven Brown School, and a few years later he encouraged the union of the School with the Michigan League for Crippled Children. At that time he built the Convalescent Home in Farmington and merged the two as the Michigan Home for Crippled Children. Later, as has been pointed out, he gave $1,000,000 to the work for crippled children, uniting the Farmington Home with the Children's Free Hospital as the Children's Hospital of Michigan.[528]

Crathern, seeming to remember in the end that she is supposed to be celebrating women's achievements, concluded that "One woman's work resulted in a great philanthropy set up to care

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[528] Alice Tarbell Crather, *In Detroit Courage Was the Fashion: The Contribution of Women to the Development of Detroit from 1701 to 1951* (Detroit, MI: Wayne University Press, 1953), 77.

for crippled children and all children needing medical attention."[529] Yet according to her actual text, all of Browne's achievements boiled down to the money Couzens gave, and the reorganization of the hospital-school into a hospital that he promoted. Revealing, then, is this: even a writer dedicated to rediscovering and centering women in their own legacies unwittingly wrote within the paradigm of the systems that had overpowered and replaced these women. Browne's work was characterized as ultimately a contribution to the cause of medicine, and her great achievement was being able to appeal to philanthropists.

This incident is reflective of a key truth that the crippled children's movement encapsulates: more recent events can cover over older legacies in ways that can make it difficult even for those who are looking for evidence of achievement and influence to find it in the historical record. The legacies of the crippled children's movement, and its usurpation by philanthropy and medical professionals, have lasting resonances in contemporary politics and lived experience in the United States.

Medicine and Philanthropy

Medicine and philanthropy, as professions, remain beneficiaries of a status quo that benefits both but quashes social change. Consider the modern American healthcare landscape. The extremely high cost of American healthcare, from prescriptions to doctor visits to mobility aids, combined with the dearth of government support for covering these costs, creates an environment in which charity can assert a great deal of influence.[530] The numbers are readily

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[529] Crather, *In Detroit*, 77.

[530] For recent work on the uniquely high (and unpredictable) costs of American healthcare, see Elisabeth Rosenthal, *An American Sickness: How Healthcare Became Big Business and How You Can Take It Back* (New York: Penguin, 2017); Marty Makary, *The Price We Pay: What Broke American Health Care--and How to Fix It* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019); Uwe E. Reinhardt, *Priced Out: The Economic and Ethical Costs of American Health Care* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); S. Vincent Rajkumar, "The High Cost of Prescription Drugs: Causes and Solutions," *Blood Cancer Journal* 10, no. 6 (June 23, 2020): 1–5, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41408-020-0338-x.

available: “The U.S. health system generally delivers worse health outcomes than any other developed country, all of which spend on average about half what we do per person.”[531] Yet many Americans think that healthcare actually costs as much as the sticker prices, and so it is an unfortunate tragedy that heroic, selfless doctors and hospitals have to charge families this amount—a tragedy that can be resolved through the generosity of donors. as they can be the only entity that stands between people and bankruptcy. Both governmental and philanthropic programs that exist to benefit people with disabilities are often prohibitively difficult to access and dependent upon the signoff of doctors, putting the medical profession in charge of defining and limiting who qualifies as “disabled” and reinscribing their power to do so in perpetuity.[532] This is not to suggest that people employed by philanthropic organizations knowingly support and sustain this status quo; however, the current state of affairs presents an ideal atmosphere for the opportunity to sustain charities which promote “the idea of helping others” as opposed to meaningful political change.[533]

Education

Disabled children’s increased access to education is the lasting achievement of the crippled children’s movement’s most ambitious aims. Despite the fact that the movement and disabled activists often called for separate schooling, the policies they promoted ultimately laid the groundwork for current educational mandates, passing local and state laws which provided education, transport to classes, and physical access to school buildings for disabled children. One

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[531] Rosenthal, *An American Sickness*, 3.
[532] Henry J. Whittle et al., “‘The Land of the Sick and the Land of the Healthy’: Disability, Bureaucracy, and Stigma among People Living with Poverty and Chronic Illness in the United States,” *Social Science & Medicine* 190 (October 1, 2017): 181–89, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.08.031.
[533] Bakal, *Charity U.S.A.,* 149. For more on the limitations of philanthropic and nonprofit entities in social movement work, see Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, ed., *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

of the hallmarks of the influence of the movement that is most visible is the terminology—the language of "crippled children" persisted for some time in state-level legislation, with Michigan removing the term from state statutes in 2015.[534] Armed with the past, we can see the presence of this language in state law as a problem to be changed to conform with more current terminology, but we can also understand its presence as evidence of the efficacy of the movement and its critical influence. The activists who advocated particular definitions and approaches to the "crippled child" successfully supported laws still being used to provide care, education, and interpersonal connections for children with disabilities a century after their earliest efforts. This kind of local, state and federal level legislation also paved the way for the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which outlawed discrimination on the basis of disability in federal and federally supported programs and is often considered the "precursor" legislation to the Disability Rights Movement and the ADA.[535]

The achievements of educational access came at a price, however—increased medical control over the definition of disablement. Educational access often depends upon a framework of "accommodations," rather than universal design principles that would make classrooms more broadly accessible in physical and nonphysical ways. These accommodations are doled out on the basis of medical diagnoses and expert evaluations which provide proof of need for services, rather than by request of the students or through personal expression of need based on experience. Moreover, parents and students who wish to request legal damages due to

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[534] Jonathan Oosting, "Michigan Senate votes to remove 'crippled children' phrase from state law," *MLive Media,* March 12, 2015, updated April 3, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/lansing-news/2015/03/michigan_senate_votes_to_remov.html.

[535] Bianca G. Chamusco, "Revitalizing the Law That 'Preceded the Movement': Associational Discrimination and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 84, no. 3 (2017): 1285–1324.

educational exclusion against federal law need to "prove that the discrimination was intentional, done in bad faith or demonstrated gross misjudgment."[536]

A Useful Past

In the process of completing this project, I have witnessed a wide variety of people reacting to the concept of disability as they ask about what I do, and the distinction in the responses between nondisabled and disabled respondents are revealing. For many nondisabled people, disability is highly individualized and brings up feelings of curiosity and discomfort that they want to work through in our conversation—something akin to what scholar Ato Quayson terms "aesthetic nervousness."[537] Some have sought for me to assuage their guilt or fear over a negative social interaction with a disabled person, to absolve them of the sin of ableism or inaccessibility that may or may not have been under their control. The key point of interest for me in these conversations is not so much about what they could or should have done in these instances; it is that these singular interactions are so notable—that disability seems so far away from their own lives that they have a singular incident that the topic brings to mind—and that they experience it primarily through curiosity and discomfort. The nondisabled public, now as then, lacks meaningful social experience with disability and disabled people.

Most revealing, most gratifying, and most troubling, however, my favorite responses have come from those engaged in disability work and activism currently, who have noted the striking similarities between what Browne, Sullivan, and Lovewell called for and what modern-

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[536] Kelle L. Murphy, "Civil Rights Laws: Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: *I.A. v. Seguin Indep. Sch. Dist.* 881 F. Supp. 2d 770," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 92, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 57–59, https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2021.1844555.

[537] Quayson uses literary analysis to highlight the ways in which disability evokes affective response in a nondisabled viewer/reader and reminds them of the temporality of their own embodiment—that is, for the nondisabled to view the disabled is to be reminded that one's body can change at any moment. Ato Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

day disability activists are still rallying around.[538] While the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 ushered in a massive set of changes to American public spaces, access is still sparse in many places in this country due to loopholes in the law and its woefully inadequate enforcement mechanism, which requires affected citizens to sue before mandating changes in public spaces. Particularly striking is the lack of progress in creating accessible living spaces. Despite the work of disability rights activists and professionals like polio survivor and architect Ronald Mace, the father of universal design, accessible homes are still not a priority for home builders or legislators.[539] In 2019, only 3.5 percent of homes included accessibility features like bathroom handrails or ground-level bedrooms.[540] Disabled Americans thus often take matters into their own hands, just as they have done for the past century—adapting existing homes to their use, creating online tools to post and search for accessible homes, and calling for changes to what is considered standard or desirable in new homes.[541] In short, within a history of the crippled children's movement, modern-day disability activists can find a "useful past"—that is, insight into the longevity of their cause, the ways in which earlier activists pursued the same goals, and a cautionary tale of what alliances and compromises may eventually cost.[542]

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[538] Thank you especially to attendees at the Institute for Human Rights' Symposium on Disability Rights, February 12-22, 2019, Birmingham, AL, for their conversations with me highlighting this point.

[539] Newspaper Clippings, 1951-1998, Box 43, Folder 6, Division of Medicine and Science Disability Reference Collection 1836-2013, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

[540] Darcell Rocket, "Accessible homes are in demand in Chicago. But that doesn't mean they're easy to find," *Chicago Tribune*, November 25, 2019. https://www.chicagotribune.com/real-estate/ct-re-accessible-homes-20191122-20191125-gq3fczhovvgwnob6tugdjnm3j4-story.html

[541] Rocket, "Accessible homes are in demand;" Sandra Fleishman, "Handicap-accessible housing market is still a work in progress," *Washington Post*, September 2, 2011.

[542] "What is usable—a culture's available artifacts—will be useful when it corresponds to the desires and directions of users." Lois Parkinson Zamora, *The Usable Past: The Imagination of History in Recent Fiction of the Americas* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

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